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A B S T R A C T

OF THE

GRACIOUS DEALINGS of GOD,

With several Eminent Christians, in
their Conversion and Sufferings.

Taken from Authentic MANUSCRIPTS,

And Published

For the Comfort and Establishment of
SERIOUS MINDS.

By SAMUEL JAMES.

*Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will de-
clare what he hath done for my Soul.*

P S A L M lxvi. 16.

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THE
P R E F A C E.

AT the request of some friends, whom I greatly esteem, the following extracts are published. I am sensible that such collections are far from being suited to the present taste, which lieth quite another way; yet I would hope that, even in this day of great and general declension, these short memoirs will meet with acceptance from those who desire to live much in communion with Christ, and frequently converse with the bible and themselves.

I wish they may be a means, in the hand of the Spirit, of awakening the consciences of some careless sinners, and of alarming lukewarm and drowsy professors, who, though they retain something of the outward form of godliness, are under little or no concern about feeling its inward, and

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heart-changing power. That is an awful charge against the church at Sardis, and, may it not be too justly applied to many members of churches in the present day? *Thou hast a name, that thou livest, and art dead.* May the Lord rouse such out of their lethargy, before their eyes are closed in eternal death! Religion is an inward thing; it consists in a divine impress on the soul, and in the work of God begun and carried on in the heart, without which the highest profession will be found, at last, no better than hypocrisy and a vain delusion, for Christ will shortly declare to all such professors, as well as to the openly prophane; *I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity.*

There are some, indeed, who make a jest of christian experience; they term the Spirit's work in the heart enthusiasm and madness, a sort of religious frenzy, or meer fiction, which hath no existence but in the disturbed fancies of melancholy minds; but, this is no wonder, since the Holy Ghost hath declared; that *the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*
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spiritual things must be viewed in the light of the Spirit, otherwise we are as incapable of knowing them, savingly and experimentally, as a man who was born blind is of describing the several sorts of colours, or one who had never any taste is of distinguishing bitter from sweet.

Indeed the whole divine work on the soul is a mystery of which we know nothing, till we come under the power and experience of the same. “ * Regeneration, saith Mr. Richard Taylor, is a thing unintelligible to all men in their natural state, it is a dream to all those who never come under it; therefore the current doctrine is most grateful to them; which makes it to be no more than to be baptized, and to live so as to have a small share of morality in the world.” But, notwithstanding this doctrine is so much derided, and the efficacy of the Spirit denied, the words of our Lord will be found true; *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* None are

* See his discourses on several subjects, vol. ii. page 200.

admitted into the new Jerusalem who have not the righteousness of the Redeemer for their title, and his image as their meetness, for, *without holiness no man shall see the Lord.*

One thing I apprehend from the following accounts, namely, that the high attainments of these christians may in some instances discourage the weak. It is to be lamented that many are prone to measure themselves by the experience of others, rather than by the word of God, and, when they find they come short of their size and stature, they are tempted from thence to conclude that they are just nothing; but let such know that this is a wrong way of judging themselves. We must not determine our state by the depths, no, nor by the heights of others; neither their deep sorrows and humiliations for sin, nor their peculiar elevations in the lively exercise of spiritual joy are the standard of what is essential to christian experience. All the children of God are born of the same Spirit, but they differ in their degree of knowledge and faith; there are babes as well as strong men in Christ; lambs as well as sheep in his fold, and shrubs as well as cedars

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cedars in Lebanon ; but, notwithstanding this difference, they are equally his : equally near and dear to him, nor will the great and good shepherd overlook the weakest of his flock, for *he gathers the lambs in his bosom ; yea, he will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.*

Assurance is not without faith, yet faith may be, and frequently exists, where assurance is wanting. There may be true grace where but little peace is enjoyed, for a real work of sanctification is not always attended with the sealing witness of the Spirit : however, I wish that the reading of these and such like experiences may excite both myself and others to press after a full perswasion of the love of God in Christ Jesus. We are commanded to give diligence to make our calling and our election sure, and if some complaining christians used more diligence, it may be presumed that they would not be found so much in the dark. The excellent persons, whose case is recorded in the following pages, were much in secret prayer, meditation, self examination, and other kinds of heart-searching exercise, and, *in those spiritual duties,*

duties, though, not *for* them, the Lord was pleased to afford them much of his gracious presence, and ample proof of their interest in his everlasting love.

In transcribing these memoirs I have taken leave to make some few alterations in the style, to render the sentiment perspicuous, and the sense more complete; I have also contracted them in some places and especially in the account of Mrs. Beaumont, to avoid being tedious, but, I hope that nothing material is omitted; some few notes are likewise subjoined, particularly in the case of Mrs. Clarkson, for the comfort and encouragement of weak believers, lest any should be staggered at the strength of her faith.

I hope that a divine blessing will attend this design to all my christian friends and acquaintance, and, particularly, to those in the counties of Hertford and Bedford, I would likewise recommend it in an especial manner to the church and congregation where I stately labour: seventeen years are now almost run out since a kind providence placed me among them, and, if my heart

heart deceives me not, I feel a growing affection towards them, and I take this opportunity of acknowledging, with gratitude, the great kindness they have shewn me, and cannot but express my warmest wishes for their spiritual and eternal welfare; my endeavour is to watch for their souls, as one that must shortly give an account, and, O that it may be with joy, and not with grief! I am frequently longing after their salvation, and ready to say, with the apostle, *for, what is my hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?*

May the Lord pour down his spirit on all his churches, that there may be a happy revival of real religion, which continueth so visibly on the decay; and may those that are planted in the house of the Lord flourish in his courts, till they are fully ripened for the church above, where *the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of waters*; yea, where we shall join those dear departed saints, of precious memory, and with them unite in the fruition of our God, and in a joyful
review

review of those dispensations of providence and grace, which have conspired in our salvation, to the endless ages of an happy eternity: That this may be the mercy of every reader, is the hearty desire and prayer of one who wisheth well to the souls of men.

*Hitchin, Feb.
10, 1760.*

SAMUEL JAMES.



*A brief Account of the Conversion and Trials
of my Honoured Grandfather, Mr. Law-
rence Spooner, who lived near Litch-
field, in the county of Stafford, in a
Time of Persecution; taken from his own
Manuscript.*

IT was my mercy to be born of Christian parents, who not only professed the form but felt the power of godliness. My reverend Father gave me the best instructions, but, my parents dying when I was young, I was left to the care of some Christian friends, who greatly valued me for my father's sake, I being his only son.

As I grew up I became very careless about my soul, wasted precious time, fell into bad com-

pany, and was addicted to drinking and other excesses, to the great grief and concern of those who had the oversight of me: I dread to tell particulars, but one thing, among many others, hath since distressed me exceedingly; namely, that I tempted a poor harmless inoffensive man to drink to excess. He is since dead, and when I think of his precious immortal soul it even pierces and rends my heart, and for ought I know, will follow me with sorrow to my grave. I did as bad by others, but they, having a greater share of natural reason, were more capable of viewing the danger, and withstanding the temptation; besides, they are still living, and who can tell but the grace of God may reach them before they die.

THUS I walked in the ways of my own heart for several years, and was suffered to run such lengths in vanity and sin, and to cast such slight on the wholesome counsel of my friends, that they were ready to give me over for lost. Some of them even ceased to pray for me; particularly one good woman, who, after conversing in a very serious solemn manner with me, said, she had left off mentioning me at the throne of grace. This expression affected me for a while very much, for I all along retained an high opi-

nion of the prayers of the righteous, though, alas! had little or no desire to pray for myself.

AT times indeed I was under convictions of sin, and a secret dread of the divine wrath, which put me upon prayer, and making promises in my own strength, of forsaking my wicked companions, and leading a new life. But these impressions soon wore off, and, to my shame be it mentioned, I grew as bad, nay worse than before. O matchless mercy! love unsought! boundless grace indeed! which spared such a wretch as I, who ran such lengths in wickedness, and sinned so wilfully against God, and the dictates of my own conscience.

BEING invited by two friends to go with them to visit some godly men, at that time in prison for conscience-sake, at length I consented. The morning they set out they sent for me, but, as the weather was wet, and being willing to make excuses, I declined the journey. Soon after they were gone I felt great remorse, attended with such reflections as these; sure I shall be condemned at the last day, because I refuse to visit prisoners who are confined for Jesus sake, whilst I live in ease and pleasure. This con-

viction wrought so powerfully, that I immediately took my horse and followed them.

I no sooner entered the prison, but I was much affected with seeing these servants of the Lord, insomuch that I could not refrain tears, though I would fain have concealed them. They soon beheld it with joy, and the conversation of one of them especially, made a deep impression on my mind*. On taking leave of these good men, I desired a share in their earnest prayers, and when I came home, began to pray for myself, which till now, alas! I had seldom done for several years. I bowed my knees in secret before the Lord, but such was the dreadful hardness of my heart, I knew not what to say; however, as enabled, I prayed for softening grace, that I might see the evil of sin, and be helped to mourn over it, and that the Lord would bring me to the knowledge of my miserable lost state and condition.

* The person referred to was one Mr. Pardoe, a useful minister in those parts, who afterwards wrote him several very friendly and affectionate letters, which were greatly blessed to his further conviction and establishment: This was about the year 1675.

I WAS under many fears lest this concern should wear off, as formerly, but these fears made me cry with more earnestness to the Lord, that convictions might be continued, and that I might be as a brand plucked out of the fire. I now loved to be alone in the house, or in the field, where I have many times spent great part of the night in fervent supplication, deep examination, and soul-searching exercises, begging that I might see more and more of the evil of sin, and be led to the blood and righteousness of the Saviour.

I WAS much affected with free grace, and unmerited, unsought for mercy. Those have been wonderful words, (Isaiah lxxv. 1.) *I am sought of them that asked not for me, I am found of them that sought me not.* And now I began to love the company of good people, whose society I had for a long time shunned, but their conversation now was very sweet, and delightful to my soul. Soon after, my former wicked companions began to assault me with great violence, striving with all their might, to turn me aside from the Lord and his people; likewise my inbred corruptions began to struggle, and seemed to rage more than ever; and Satan set upon me with no small fury, tempting me to leave off prayer, and for some

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little

little time he prevailed ; but still such thoughts as these would follow me : where can I go ? whither, O whither, can I fly ? those that are afar off from God must perish, &c. which brought me again upon my knees, with shame and confusion of face, before the great searcher of hearts.

At length he who loves to pity souls had pity on me ; the Lord heard my voice, and my cry came up before him ; my fears were quickly turned into faith, my despair into hope, and my darkness into light ; my sorrow was turned into joy, my pain into ease, my bondage into liberty, and my storm into a sweet calm ; in short, my fetters were all knocked off, and my poor imprisoned soul set at liberty ; my wounds were all healed with the balm of the covenant, my filthy garments taken away, and there was given me change of raiment. Now was my head lifted up above all mine enemies, my heart was filled with joy and gladness, and a new song put into my mouth ; bless the Lord, O my soul !

In this delightful frame I gave myself up to the church, where I quickly had the sweet sealings of the Divine Spirit. These words were

were impressed with great power soon after my entering on a publick profession, Math. xxv. 23. *Well done, good and faithful servant.* This was followed with that exceeding great and precious promise, Hebr. xiii. part of the fifth verse, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* My heart was now even ravished with a sense of the love of God in Christ Jesus, and so rich were my entertainments in the kingdom of grace, that I seemed to be in a new world; old things were now passed away, behold, all things were become new!

BUT this sweet frame was short. It pleased the Lord gradually to withdraw himself, and to abate these sweet refreshments, and to mingle some bitterness therewith, till, at last, he suffered me to fall into very deep exercises and distress indeed, which continued about the space of one whole year, during which season I was sorely buffeted and tempted by Satan, and especially to three things.

ONE was to entertain horrid, blasphemous thoughts.

NOTWITHSTANDING all my former evidence of unseen things, so frail is human nature

when tempted, I began greatly to question the state of my own soul, the truth of the holy scriptures, the reality of a future world, yea, and I may say, the very being of a God. O none can conceive, but those who have experienced the same, what distress and terror my poor soul was now in. I was like a person falling into an overwhelming distraction; and such a sense of sin, and dread of the terrible majesty of an angry Almighty God soon followed, that I feared divine justice would immediately strike me dead, or the earth open and swallow me up: yea, with reverential tears I write it, I thought the very air began to wax hot about me.

'Tis impossible to express what I felt; but, God knows my heart, I had rather undergo the most exquisite torments that mortal creatures can inflict, than feel the like again; I seemed as though I had been with Israel upon mount Sinai, and had heard the giving forth of that fiery law, which made even Moses exceedingly fear and quake.

Let Atheists tremble and bold sinners fear,
Who may hereafter this relation hear.

ANOTHER temptation was concerning my love to my dear Saviour, and to call in question
his

his love towards me; and so fiercely were Satan's fiery darts cast at me, that I was forced to make a perpetual verbal resistance, which, with the ardent striving of my spirit, and the season of the year, so affected me, that I think I may truly say I was almost smothered with the heat, having hardly time to lift up my head for a little air, as I lay struggling on the ground. During this fore conflict, I frequently replied to Satan, saying, I hope I shall love him, I hope I shall, I hope I shall. At last through great mercy this word, *I believe I shall*, was put into my mouth, whereby my courage encreased, and the power of the temptation very sensibly abated.

BUT a third assault in this sad season, was that of spiritual pride; I no sooner perceived this coming upon me, but I think I should have run through a burning fire to have found a place of shelter; but since that could not be, I immediately retired, using these words a great number of times during my resistance of the adversary, *Lord, hide me, hide me; O remove pride from me, &c.!* But this conflict, through mercy, was shorter than those I had before met with.

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DURING the continuance of these fore temptations, I frequently retired into the fields, where I have spent a great part of the night in earnest cries, and strong wrestlings with the Lord, till at length I conceived some small hope: by degrees my spirit revived, the cloud broke, the day began to dawn, and the sun of righteousness arose with fresh healing in his wings.

AND I hope these sharp conflicts were profitable on many accounts. Hereby I was perfectly cured of those atheistical thoughts which used to trouble me;—I was likewise helped to engage in the duty of prayer, both in my closet and family, with greater reverence and seriousness, and with more awe of the Divine Majesty, which was henceforth inscribed on my heart in the deepest characters.——I also saw more of the plague of my own heart, appearing to myself nothing else but an emblem of spiritual Babylon; the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

ONE thing especially these fearful combats taught me, namely, never to desire a sight of sin without a view of the Saviour. I had many times intreated, with as much vehemence and earnestness as ever I asked any thing almost, that
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the Lord would give me a greater sight and sense of sin, and open to my view all the corrupt channels of my heart. He answered my request, but so terribly in righteousness, that it made me ever after very careful how I asked for such discoveries. In short, I was hereby taught to pity the tempted, as well as prepared for those future trials I was to pass through, which I shall now briefly relate, to the glory of God, and the encouragement of others.

IN the year 1683, on the first day of October, we had a considerable meeting at my house, not only of our own friends, but also several from other societies near us; who were assembled together to hear a very worthy minister, that came many miles to preach the Gospel among us. While he was engaged in prayer, two informers came in, unknown to us all, and, after being silent a while, one of them began to speak aloud, and to disturb the assembly.

A little before he began to speak, I had a sudden strong impression on my mind, that some informer was there, and that, in case he gave us any disturbance, I should go to him, and endeavour to prevent him; accordingly I went, and calling them both aside, desired them not to interrupt

us in our worship, adding, that if ought was done contrary to law, they knew what advantage they had against house or hearers. They told me they wondered I would keep such unlawful assemblies at my house; I replied I was not careful to answer in that matter, having rules for our practice long before these laws of the realm were made, wishing them again not to interrupt the meeting. They then desired to know the preacher's name, and said they would depart; this I refused, yet they withdrew without any further interruption.

A few days after, they went in great triumph to the meeting of justices, to inform against us, and calling on one of our society by the way, told him, with an air of contempt, that they were going about our business. But the justices only gave them for answer, that they would consult with their fellows, and appoint them a time to come again.

PERCEIVING the enemy now likely to come in like a flood, we concluded to set a day apart for solemn humiliation, fasting, and prayer. At the close of this meeting two questions were debated, the one, whether we should continue our

meetings at the usual place, and keep them openly as before? The other; whether we should dispose of our goods privately, or, if God in his providence should permit, suffer them to be seized?

WITH regard to the former question, it was determined to keep our meetings as usual, not only as the place was most commodious, but lest our seeking more privacy should embolden our enemies. And that word was brought to my mind, Isa. li. 12. *Who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man, which shall be made as grass?* As to our goods we determined nothing, only these queries were proposed to consideration, Whether those great and precious promises made to such who suffer for Christ and his gospel, are not beyond any of God's creatures here below? Whether those practices which, most use in a time of suffering, are not plainly forbidden in the word? And whether any affliction that befalls the people of God, is not for the trial of their faith, and for their profit? And if so, whether Christians may not take joyfully the spoiling of their goods?

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Having thus by prayer and supplication made our requests known unto God, and committed the keeping of our souls, our bodies, and our substance to him, as to a faithful Creator; we agreed to wait upon the Lord, to keep in the path of duty, and to strengthen the feeble-minded, to support the weak, and to shew ourselves patient towards our enemies.

THE next Lord's-day the informers went to break up another meeting, but missing their aim, they came to ours about the conclusion of the same, while we were commemorating the death and sufferings of our blessed Saviour: they rushed in very hastily, I suppose, thinking to have surprized us; they began to speak very confidently what they pleased, but perceiving the minister make no pause, nor any of the people rise from their seats, it gave a check to their boldness. After they had sat some considerable time, and, one of them especially, appearing to be under convictions, they withdrew, and our meeting ended in comfort and peace.

AFTER this they disturbed our worship but once, when they kept silence till prayer was ended, then one of them, in a confident manner, began to cast several severe reflections, to which

which I was helped to reply; a short debate passed between us, on which they seemed ashamed, and in a confused manner, they all quitted the place, from which time our meetings were not interrupted.

PERCEIVING they had got nothing by coming thus among us, and knowing that we had already forfeited as much, or more, than some of our personal estates, they had recourse to their main design, which was to strip us of our outward substance, in order to enrich themselves: accordingly they went again to the justices at their next meeting, and laid a fresh information, by which means they obtained warrants for one hundred pounds, sixty of which was laid upon me; besides which, several other warrants were at the same time issued out for lesser fines, &c.

INFORMATION thus given, and the warrants produced, occasioned no small consternation in the neighbourhood. Nothing but utter ruin was now expected, unless the course of law was stopped, or my goods secured. My neighbours discovered great concern both for my person and family; several who were no way related to me were greatly afflicted, insomuch that it broke their natural rest; these blamed me at the same
time

time for endangering my person and property, by continuing to keep open meetings, and refusing their counsel, which was to get my goods secured; and some of my dear christian friends were also ready to join in with them, chiding me for my rash unreasonable conduct, and telling me that they could direct me to more safe, yet lawful methods. And to say the truth, when it came to the trial, I had enough to do to silence the bold reasonings of my own flesh and blood.

AMIDST the hurry and confusion of my mind under these circumstances, I constantly sought the Lord, for wisdom and prudence to direct my affairs, desiring I might take especial heed of hasty proceedings, knowing that he that believeth must not, in these cases, make haste. I had also some passages of scripture strongly impressed on my spirit, from whence I firmly believed, that the Lord would so bridle mine enemies, that they should not have their full designs against me, particularly Isa. xxxvii. 29. *I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.* Such support and comfort these words afforded, that amidst all my sorrows I was even ready to sing for joy.

When

When God supports, who then can cast us
down ?

His smiles are life, but death attends his
frown.

WHEN the officers came to execute the warrant, I suffered them to enter my house without the least opposition, and when I had read it, I spoke to this purpose ; that although I had done nothing to deserve such a seizure, yet, forasmuch as I made conscience not to conform, or submit to the laws I lived under, I would quietly bear what God should permit them to do : I confess this was trying to me, who had always lived in great plenty of outward things, and who had relations of some account in the world, to see my self stript of all my goods at once, which I had honestly provided, having at the same time a family of small children about me : my neighbours also discovered great concern upon this occasion, but especially my wife, poor heart, burst into tears, to think that her house should be plundered, and all her goods seized, and sold in her sight ; yet, after a while, she recovered herself, saying, that if it was the will of the Lord it should be so, she desired to submit.

My goods being thus seized, and an inventory taken, the officers gave us a strict charge that nothing should be removed; they cried them the next market-day, at Litchfield, my wife was present at the time: all sorts of cattle, hay, and household goods to be sold very cheap, &c. When they were at first proclaimed, several ill-minded persons began to covet them, and offered to buy, but, as God would have it, a terror soon fell on the minds of most, and the people in general so discouraged one another, that not a single person appeared at the sale.

THIS enraged my adversaries so much the more, and put them upon driving all my cattle that were fit for the market, to Litchfield, which was about a mile distant. It was with great difficulty they forced them out of the field, and when they brought them to market, no man would buy them; after which they drove them to another market, but sold them not there*.

FINDING their hopes thus frustrated, they obtained leave of the justices to fetch my goods

* At last it pleased God to permit the bailiff of the hundred to purchase them.

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to Litchfield, and there sell them at their leisure, urging the shame and disgrace they should fall under in case they were not sold, and that Lawrence Spooner himself would laugh in their faces, &c. Accordingly two of them came to my house, and, giving me very lofty language, began to rattle the rooms, demanding the keys of the chests and coffers, which my wife with some reluctance delivered, to prevent their being broken in pieces. But when they had got possession of my effects they could not hire waggons to carry them away, though they proffered double the price of carriage; at last indeed they procured two teams, which were very weak, and the ways being then bad, they were for some time by that means hindered; then they importuned a neighbour, who was no friend to dissenters, to come over his ground, but prevailed not. Thus providence prevented their designs till those men with whom they had agreed refused carrying the goods at any rate.

NOTWITHSTANDING all these difficulties they hoped ere long without fail to compass their end: in the mean while they drank exceeding hard; and one of them said, in the hearing of a person of credit, Come fill us a

thousand jugs, we will have them all paid for, and boldly sang, *One hundred pounds will buy a soul from hell*, &c. My friend replied, it was not best to drink too hard for they might not be able to accomplish their designs. He answered although they had received no money as yet, they should hereafter; adding, that the king would place a loyal subject in my house shortly, and then asked, what would I do?

BUT I desire with awful reverence to mention the following circumstance: this same person, either by excessive drinking, or, as some have thought, by a secret stroke from God, declined by little and little, drooping away and soon died. Before he died he was smitten with a wounded conscience, and almost in his last words said, God forgive me; I have greatly injured those I have informed against, which troubles me more than any thing I have ever done in my life, bidding those present to mark his setter on, saying, that divine vengeance would certainly follow him, and much more to the same purpose: this being noised abroad it greatly daunted some daring sinners, and so awed the minds of all, that none durst buy any sort of goods belonging to me, nor come to fetch any thing out of my house.

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THE informers growing quite weary of this way of striving, some of the justices took me in hand, and were fully determined to have the warrant executed, especially as they had met with so much trouble in this affair, and I had never in person, or by others sought any favour from them; my character as an honest man was alone in my favour, notwithstanding which, when they had heard that we still kept our meetings as usual, they threatened the constable, and, at last, which I long expected, I was summoned before them.

THE next morning I set forth attended by a christian friend, and as we rode along spake to my companion as follows. Could we now see the heavens open, and God Almighty sitting as on a throne, governing all the world, and holding both men and devils in chains, saying to them, as to the sea; Hitherto shall ye go and no further, and here shall your proud waves be staid, how fearless should we be to day of those persons before whom we are going to stand; adding, moreover, that although sense could not see this, yet faith discerned it; and, through grace, of this truth we had a most convincing evidence; for when we came to the place the constable presented the warrant, saying,

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ing, that I was there ; upon which the justices, after consulting together, returned this answer, that he might take me home again, for they desired not to see me.

I RETURNED with great admiration. And that very evening the society had appointed to meet in order to take their leave of me, expecting it would be a night of sorrow, and that I should be sent to prison the next morning. But the Lord made it a season of great comfort and joy, not only as I was so wonderfully restored, but also in sending a precious servant of his providentially among us, who preached that night from Jer. ix. 7. *Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will melt them, and try them, for how shall I do for the daughter of my people?* He spake so affectionately and powerfully from the words, shewing God's gracious ends and designs in trying his people's faith and patience, that it greatly affected us all : and I could not forbear singing after such an unexpected deliverance as this ;

O world of wonders, what a providence !
That I should thus be brought from thence !
My foes enthal'd, myself set free !
To spread his praises, in my liberty !

AFTER

AFTER these things had passed, my enemies knew not what course to take in order to hinder our meetings, and to revenge themselves on my person, or goods. They were like men tied hand and foot, and could do me no more mischief, therefore from this time, through mercy, we had rest: and, so remarkable was the providence of God, that my adversaries themselves met with abundance of trouble throughout the whole of this prosecution. The chief informer complained he lost by me, the constable was charged with being bribed from a due execution of the warrants, and the justices were wearied in about two years perplexity in this affair. So that I may say with the psalmist, Psalm ix. 15, 16. *In the net which they hid is their own foot taken, the Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth, the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.* Higgaion, Selah.

AT last king Charles the II^d. died, which put a stop to sufferings for the present, and although after two years they were revived, and I endured many hard things for conscience-sake; yet after all the storms were over, and my enemies had done their utmost, I think I lost not from first to last above thirty pounds, for which I had so comfortable a crop of experience that

I have the greatest reason to forgive them, and do heartily pray that God would not lay it eternally to their charge. Most gladly would I serve the worst of my enemies, especially in what concerns their souls: This I find to be the very life of Christ, who always went about doing good. And the perfections of the glorious deity perhaps are not imitable in any thing more than in this, for he causeth his sun to shine on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. Matth. v. 45.

IN the midst of my trials I had many precious promises, and secret supports and comforts from above, that strangers intermeddle not with, insomuch that I durst not have exchanged my condition with the greatest men in the world, who lived at ease and was free from sufferings; and as I had the promises to stay and support me all along, so I have since seen them fulfilled, in a way I the least expected. I mean in the Lord's blessing me abundantly with all sorts of temporal blessings, so that what I lost is more than made up. My cup is not only full, but it runneth over. I have found such a manifest difference in my temporal estate, that it does not seem to be the same inheritance, but one far more large and fruitful. I have enough, and
enough.

enough of all kinds of earthly comforts, and perhaps something considerable to spare notwithstanding my yearly expence, I mean something where with I can shew kindness to the Lord's ministers, and his poor people.

IN short, my mind since these exercises has been more calm, comfortable, and composed, and I have had Christ Jesus my Saviour more constantly in my heart and eye than ever before ; so that I have come out of this wilderness leaning upon him, who I hope and trust will still guard and defend me from men and devils, and at last present me without fault before him, with exceeding joy.

LAWRENCE SPOONER.

Note, This excellent man lived several years after his sufferings, and was not only an exemplary christian but useful minister, much known and valued in those parts. He died and was buried at Curborow, near Litchfield, where he was born, and in which place he had always dwelt ; but his age, and the year of his death, I cannot recover.



The choice Experience of Mrs. Rebecca Combe, eldest daughter of the late Rev. Mr. David Clarkson, delivered by her on her admission into fellowship with the Church, late under the care of the late Rev. Mr. Thomas Gouge.

IN giving an account of the dealings of God with my soul, I desire truly and sincerely to represent the state of my case; I am sensible it will be in much weakness, but I hope my end is that God may have the glory of his own work, which he hath wrought on so mean and unworthy a creature as myself.

I HAD the advantage and invaluable blessing of a religious education, both my parents being eminent for wisdom and grace. Under the instructions of my good mother I had early and frequent convictions, though these impressions lasted

lasted not long, for I wore them off, either by a formal engaging in some religious duties, or else by running into such diversions as were suited to my childhood. But my convictions being renewed as I grew up, and it being impressed on my mind that this way of performing duties, by fits and starts, meerly to quiet an accusing conscience, would not satisfy the desires of an immortal soul capable of higher enjoyments than I took up with; this put me on serious thoughtfulness what method to pursue, in order to bind myself to a more stated performance of those duties, which I was convinced the Lord required of me.

ACCORDINGLY I made a most solemn resolution to address myself to God by prayer, both morning and evening, and never, on any occasion whatever, to neglect it, calling the Lord to witness against me, if I broke this solemn engagement. But, alas! I soon saw the vanity of my own resolutions, for as I was only found in the performance of duty through fear, and as a task, and, having once omitted it at the set time, I concluded my promise was now broke, and from that time continued in a total neglect of prayer, till it pleased the Almighty Spirit to return with his powerful operations,
and

and set my sins in order before me. Then my unsuitable carriage under former convictions, together with my breaking the most solemn engagements to the Lord wounded me deep. Indeed I was tempted to conclude I had sinned the unpardonable sin, and should never be forgiven:

YET, in my greatest distress and anguish of spirit, I could not give up all hope, having some views of the free and sovereign grace of God, as extended to the vilest and worst of sinners, though I could not take the comfort of it to myself. My sins appeared exceeding sinful. I even loathed and abhorred myself on account of them, and was continually begging a deeper sense and greater degrees of humiliation. I thought I could have been content, yea, I was desirous to be filled with the utmost horror and terror of which I was capable, if this might be a means of bringing me to that degree of sorrow, which I apprehended the Lord expected from so vile a creature. The heinous nature of my sins, and their offensiveness to the pure eyes of his holiness was ever before me, inso-much that I thought I could not be too deeply wounded, or feel trouble enough.

THIS

THIS put me on a constant and restless application to God through Christ, from whom alone I now saw all my help must come. I had tried the utmost I could do, and found it left me miserably short of what the law required, and I wanted. I was convinced that an expectation of some worthiness in myself, as the condition of my acceptance before God, was that which had kept me so long from Christ and the free promises of the gospel; and therefore, as enabled, I went to the Lord and pleaded those absolute promises of his word, which are made freely to sinners in his son, without the least qualification to be found in me. I was enabled to urge those encouraging words, Rev. xxii. 17. *Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will let him take the water of life freely.* Also Isaiah lv. 1. *Without money and without price;* with many more of the like nature, which would be too tedious to mention. I desired to come to Christ, unworthy as I was, and cast my soul entirely upon him, for I clearly saw that all I had heretofore done profited me nothing, since my very prayers, considered as a sinner, were an abomination to the Lord. There was nothing left therefore for me to take the least comfort and encouragement from, but the free grace of God in Christ Jesus, which I continued to plead

plead with much earnestness, and found my soul enlarged beyond whatever I had experienced before.

Soon after I providentially opened a manuscript of my father's, and cast my eye upon that part of it where he was shewing what pleas a sensible sinner might make use of in prayer. Many things were mentioned which were very reviving. I was miserable, and that might be a plea. I might also plead his own mercy, the suitableness, the largeness, and the freeness of his mercy. I might plead my own inability to believe, of which I was very sensible.—I might also plead the will of God, for he commands sinners to believe, and is highly dishonoured by unbelief.—I might likewise plead the descent of faith, it is the gift of God and the nature of this gift, which is free. Yea I might plead the examples of others who have obtained this gift, and that against the greatest unlikelihood and improbabilities that might be. I might and could plead further, my willingness to submit to any thing, so that I might but find this favour with the Lord. Moreover I might plead Christ's prayer,—and his compassions,—the workings of his spirit already begun;—that regard which the Lord shews to
irra-

irrational creatures; he hears their cries, and will he shut out the cries of a poor perishing sinner?—In short, I might plead my necessity and extreme need of faith, a sense of which was deeply impressed on my soul*.

ON reading these pleas I found great relief, yea, they were to me as a voice from heaven, saying, This is the way, walk in it. I was enabled to go and act faith upon a redeemer, and could give up my all to him and trust in him alone for all. I was now convinced by his spirit that he would work in me what was well-pleasing and acceptable to God, and that he required nothing of me but what his free rich grace would bestow upon me. Now was Christ exceeding precious to my soul, and I longed for clearer discoveries of him, both in his person and offices, as prophet, priest, and king.

AND O how did I admire his condescending love and grace to such a poor wretched, worthless creature as myself! I was greatly delighted in frequent acts of resignation to him, desiring that every faculty of my soul might be brought

* See the above pleas excellently enlarged on in Mr. Clarkson's volume of Sermons and Discourses, published since his death, pag. 123, &c.

into an entire obedience, and could part with every offensive thing, and would not have spared so much as one darling lust, but was ready to bring it forth and slay it before him. In short, I could now perceive a change wrought in my whole soul; I now delighted in what before was my greatest burden, and found that most burthensome in which I before most delighted. I went on pleasantly in duty; my meditation on him was sweet, and my heart much enlarged in admiring his inexpressible love and grace, so free and sovereign to so wretched a creature, which even filled my soul with wonder and love.

BUT this delightful frame did not long continue, for I was soon surprized with swarms of vain thoughts, which appeared in my most solemn approaches to God, and such violent hurries of temptation as greatly staggered my faith, which was weak. Hereupon I was ready to give up all, and to conclude that I had mocked God and cheated my own soul, that these wandering thoughts and this unfixedness of mind in duty, could never consist with a sincere love to the things of God. I thought my heart had been fixed, but, O! how exceeding deceitful did I then find it? which greatly distressed me,

me, and made me conclude my sins were rather increased than mortified, insomuch that I was ready to cry out, O wretched creature that I am who shall deliver me from the body of this death! and in consideration of the power and prevalency of indwelling corruptions, and daily temptations, which I had to grapple with, I was ready to say I shall one day fall by the hands of these enemies.

BUT these discouragements were fully removed by reading some of my father's writings, where it was observed that a person had no reason to conclude his sins were more increased merely because they appeared more and became more troublesome, since this arose from the opposition they now met with from that principle of grace which now was implanted. Hence I learned that before the flesh reigned quietly in me, and that therefore I perceived not the lusts thereof, but now all the powers and faculties of my soul were engaged against them, they gave me the greatest disturbance and struggled more and more. Also these words were impressed on my mind with an efficacious power, 2 Corinth. xii 9. *My grace is sufficient for thee,* which gave me peace in believing that it should be to me according to his word.

D

THUS

THUS after many conflicts, comforts, and supports I determined to give myself up to some church, that I might partake of the Lord's Supper, and have my faith confirmed in the blood of that everlasting covenant, which I hoped the Lord had made with me, since he had given me his spirit as the earnest thereof. I accordingly was joined to a church, and in coming to this ordinance, found great delight: my faith was strengthened and my love increased from that sweet communion I then enjoyed with my Lord by his blessed spirit, who often filled me with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Thus I walked under the sweet and comfortable sense of his love, and whilst in the way of my duty, I was thus indulged with such sights of the redeemer's glory, and such a taste of his grace, I frequently wished, that I might never more go back to the world again.

BUT after all these manifestations; O wretched creature! God in his providence calling me more into the world by changing my condition; this new relation brought new affections and new temptations, which, being too much yielded to, insensibly prevailed, and brought me into such perplexing darkness that I want words to express it. I lost the sense of the love of God, and
hence

hence my duty was performed without that delight I had once experienced the want of which made me often neglect it, and especially in private, while I attended on publick worship with little advantage or pleasure.

THE consideration of this decay in my love and the loss of those quickening influences of the spirit which I used to experience in duty, increased my darkness, and I had doleful apprehensions of my state. And my inordinate love to the creature, and want of submission to the will of the Lord, in disposing of what I had so unduly set my heart on, prepared me to look for awful things, in a way of judgment from the righteous God, which I afterwards found, his hand which was soon laid on that very object by which I had so provoked him; for a disorder seized him, under which he long languished till it ended in his death *.

THIS was a melancholy stroke, and the more so as I saw his hand stretched out still, for I continued in an unsuitable temper, and without that submission which such a dispensation called

* Her husband died of a consumption at Hitchin, but in what year I know not.

for. The Lord still hid his face from me, and it is impossible to give a particular account of those perplexing thoughts, and tormenting fears, which filled my mind. Every thing appeared dreadfully dark both within and without. O, were it possible to describe it to others, as I then felt it, they would dread that which will separate between them and God! I expected if the Lord did return, it would be in a terrible way, by some remarkable judgment or other, but often times, from the frame I was in, I could see no ground to hope he would ever return at all.

BUT was it to me according to my dismal apprehensions and fears? Oh! no; my soul and all that is within me bless and adore his name, under a sense of his free and sovereign grace, who manifested himself unto thee as a God pardoning iniquity transgression and sin. This was the title by which he manifested himself to Moses, when he caused his glory to pass before him, (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.) And it was in the clear apprehension and powerful application of this by the Almighty spirit that I was brought to admire so greatly the free grace of God thus discovered to me in so extraordinary a manner, that it even transported my very soul
with

with love and thankfulness, beyond any thing that I had experienced, in the whole of my past life.

THE beginning of this wonderful alteration in my frame was hearing the experience of one which I thought very much like my own, when the Lord first began to work on my soul. I concluded that this person was the subject of a real and universal change, on this occasion I determined to consider my former experience; in doing of which I found the blessed spirit of all grace assisting me, and witnessing to his work upon my heart, insomuch that ere I was aware, my soul was like the chariots of a willing people; I was wonderfully enlivened in duty, and enlarged in thankfulness to God, for thus manifesting himself, and directing me to those means which he had so inexpressibly blessed beyond my expectation*.

* This shews the benefit of communicating experiences. *As in water face answers to face, so the heart of men to men*, Prov. xxvii. 19. And though this great duty is much neglected, by Christians in the present day; yet, I am perswaded, the Lord would bless it for mutual comfort, quickening, and establishment. As the wise man speaks, ver. 17. *Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend*;

THUS the Lord drew me by the cords of love, and lifted up the light of his countenance upon me, so that in his light I saw light, which scattered that miserable cloud of darkness that had enwrapped my soul so long. Yea, he dispelled all those unbelieving thoughts which were apt to arise on account of that low estate out of which he had newly raised me. It was suggested to me that this was not his ordinary way of dealing with such provoking creatures as myself, but that they are usually filled with terrors, and brought down even to a view of the lowest hell, &c. Thus Satan endeavoured to hold me under unbelieving fears, but the blessed spirit, by taking of the things of Christ, and shewing them unto me, prevailed over the temptation.

I HAD a discovery of the glory of the father's love as unchangeable, free, and eternal, which was discovered in pitching on me before the foundation of the world. And the glory of the son as proceeding from the father, and

i. e. it gives him a whet, and, as it were, sets a new edge upon him. Good mens graces are sharpened by converse with those that are good, and bad mens lusts and passions are sharpened by those that are bad. So Mr. Henry.

offering

offering a sacrifice of a sweet smelling favour, and in bringing in an everlasting righteousness, which by his spirit he enabled me to rest wholly and alone upon as the foundation of every blessing which I have received, or he has promised for the whole of my acceptance before God, for my justification, sanctification, and full redemption. On this foundation he has enabled me steadfastly to rely, which greatly enlivens and enlarges my soul in its addresses to the father through the son by the assistance of the holy spirit for pardon and strength, against those powerful corruptions which still remain in my heart.

O the love! the infinite condescending and unchanging love of the father! and, O that fulness of grace which is treasured up in my Redeemer, to be bestowed on me, by his promised spirit! of which so much hath already been communicated that my soul is even overwhelmed under the sense and consideration of it! The Lord appears to me as resting in his love, and joying over me with singing, as it is expressed, Zeph. iii. 17. which scripture, with many others, has been so opened and applied as makes my approaches to him exceeding delightful. And this sense of his love lays me

low in the views of my own vileness and unworthiness, and constrains me to love him and live to him, and to give him all the glory of that change which of his own free and sovereign grace he has wrought in me. There was nothing in me to move him to this, yea, what was there not in me to provoke him to cast me off for ever? But, thus it hath pleased him to magnify his grace and mercy on a creature the most unworthy of any that ever received a favour at his hands.

I KNOW not where to end. He has recovered me from amongst the dead, and he shall have the glory of it whilst I live: yes, I will praise him and tell of the wonders of his love to others, that so he may be honoured, and none may distrust him. He has filled me with his praises, though he has not given me that natural capacity which some have been blessed with to express what I feel and find of his work on my soul. But this I can say, I have found him whom my soul loves, he hath manifested himself to me, and there is nothing I dread so much as losing sight of him again. His presence makes all his ordinances, and all his providences, and every thing delightful unto me. It is impossible to express the joy of my soul in sweet
converses

converses with him, with a sense of his love and the experience of his presence, under the influences of his spirit, whose office it is to abide with me, and to guide, direct, and comfort me for ever.

'Tis from a sense of my duty and a desire to follow the direction of that blessed spirit, that I request fellowship with you of this church *. Amongst you my Lord has been pleased to discover himself to me, and to make the ministry you sit under exceeding useful and comfortable to my soul; by it I have been built up and settled on the right foundation, the righteousness of Christ, that rock that shall never be moved. Your order likewise appears to me very beautiful and lovely, being, as I apprehend, most agreeable to the rules of my Lord. Hence I desire to have communion with you, that so by your example and watchfulness over me, and the other advantages arising from church-fellowship I may find what I expect, and earnestly desire in communion with you, namely, that I may experience fellowship with the father and the

* A church in London, then under the pastoral care of the Rev. Mr. Thomas Gouge, to which she removed her communion, and at the time of her admission gave this account.

son through the eternal spirit, whilst I wait upon him in the ways of his own appointment.

December 17, 1697.

REBECCA COMBE.

THIS valuable christian lived to a good old age; she was confined by illness for four years before her death, during which she had large experience, and greatly valued her stated habitual seasons for converse with God, and longed much for the time when all hindrances and restraints should be for ever removed. She slept in Jesus, Nov. 20, 1744, aged 79 years, and her remains were interred in Bunhill-Fields.

The



The remarkable Experience of Mrs. Gertrude Clarkson, second daughter of the late Rev. Mr. David Clarkson, given to the Church with whom she lived in communion; with a short account of her comfortable end.

MY education has been very strict. The constant instruction and example of my parents had so early an influence, that it is hard to tell which was my first awakening. Ever since I can remember any thing of myself I have had frequent convictions of the danger of sin, and an unregenerate state, attended with fears of the punishment due to it, therefore was desirous of an interest in Christ, by whom I might be pardoned and saved from the wrath of God. This made me very fearful of omitting duties, or committing known sins, and, though these convictions wore off, yet they often returned,
and

and rendered me uneasy, unless I was praying or learning scriptures, or something which I thought good. In these exercises I was well satisfied, though it was my happiness to be under the most careful inspection and judicious helps for the informing of my judgment.

BEFORE I apprehended what it was to rely upon an all-sufficient Saviour for righteousness and strength, I remember my notion of things was this, that I was to hear and pray, and keep the sabbath, and avoid what I knew to be sin, and then I thought God was obliged to save me; that I did what I could, and so all that he required, and I further conceived that if at any time I omitted secret prayer, or any other duty, yet if I repented it was sufficient; and, on this consideration I have often ventured upon the commission of sin, with a resolve to repent the next day, and then having confessed the transgression, my conscience has been easy, and I was well satisfied. Indeed sin, at that time, was not burdensome, I truly desired that my sins might be pardoned, but thought the ways of religion hard, and, though I durst not live in the constant neglect of duty, yet I secretly wished that I had been under no obligation to perform it. When I reflect on the thoughts and
workings

workings of my heart and affections in these times, and the confused apprehensions which I then had both of sin and grace, I am fully persuaded that, through grace, there is a real and, in some measure, an universal change wrought* in my soul.

AFTER my father's death, I was reading one of his manuscripts, wherein both the object and nature of saving faith was described, and the great necessity of it pressed, &c †. The plain and clear definition there given of the saving act of faith, caused other apprehensions of things than I had before. I then began to see how short I had come in all my performances of that disposition of soul which the gospel

* A good rule for doubting Christians to judge of their state by, to look back and compare themselves with themselves what they once were with what they *now* are, at least desire to be. Surely most on such a review may say with the blind man John ix. 25. *One thing I know, that whereas I was blind now I see.* They may see their former blindness and darkness, and distance from God, and those few desires after and delight in him, &c.

† See Mr. Clarkson's volume of Sermons before referred to in Mrs. Combe's account. And it is very remarkable, these discourses concerning faith were greatly blessed to both daughters after their father's death.

called

called for, and how guilty I was while depending upon these performances for acceptance with God, not casting myself wholly and alone upon Christ, and resting on his righteousness entirely for pardon and justification. The concern of my mind was very great that I had lived so long ignorant of those things which related to my eternal welfare. I was sensible the means and helps I had been favoured with for improvement in knowledge were beyond what is common, but I had refused instruction, the consideration of which was very terrible to my thoughts, fearing lest I had sinned beyond all hope of forgiveness.

BUT in the most discouraging apprehensions of my case my heart was much enlarged in the confession of sin, and in bewailing my captivity to it, which was attended with earnest wrestlings with the Lord for pardoning and purifying grace. Those absolute promises in the 36th chapter of Ezekiel of a new heart and right spirit were my continual plea together with Matth. v. 6. *Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.* I found longings and pantings of soul after that righteousness, and saw that it could only be received by faith, this faith I earnestly begged,
and

and that the Lord would pardon that great sin of unbelief which so provoked and dishonoured him, and that he would by his own spirit enable me to embrace Christ, as freely held forth in the gospel.

ABOUT this time I was much affected with the consideration of Christ's offices as prophet, priest and king. And though I durst not claim an interest in them, yet was often meditating upon them, admiring that infinite condescension which is manifested therein. I thought whatever my condition was in this world, yet if I might but be under his powerful and effectual teachings as a prophet, and have the benefit of his atonement and intercession as a priest, and be entirely subject to him in every faculty of my soul, as my Lord and King, then how satisfied and happy should I be!

I WAS under these strugglings a long time before I came to any comfortable persuasion that I was accepted. Sins against light and love deeply wounded me, and the many aggravating circumstances which attended them were so represented by Satan, that I could not tell how to believe such iniquities as mine would be forgiven. But in the midst of these distressing thoughts

thoughts I found in that manuscript of my father's that none but unworthy sinners, who are empty of all good in themselves, were the objects of pardoning mercy, that the whole needed not the physician but the sick. This encouraged me to plead with hope that the Lord would glorify the freeness of his own grace in my salvation, and to urge that Christ called the weary and heavy laden to him with a promise of rest. (Matth. xi. 28) *.

I found my soul was extremely burdened with sin; it appeared more exceeding sinful than ever before, sins of thought as well as words and actions were then observed with sorrow, and lamented before him. Yea even the sins of my most holy things, those swarms of vain thoughts and wanderings of heart and affections, of which I was conscious in my secret retirements, and most solemn close dealings with God. In short my own soul was my intolerable burden, which made me often question

* This is a word in season, indeed, to him that is weary, has been useful to thousands under first concern as well as afterwards. And it is spoke by him that is holy, he that is true may therefore be depended on under the greatest discouragements that can be thought of.

whether

whether there were not more provoking sins in me than God used to pardon. O I found how every power and faculty was depraved, and that I could not do the good I would !

IT would be tedious to relate the many particular discouragements and temptations I laboured under, sometimes pouring forth my soul with some hope in his free mercy, sometimes only bewailing my condition without hope, till it pleased him, whose power and grace no impenitent heart can resist and prevail, to put a stop to my unbelieving reasonings, from the unlikelihood of such sins being pardoned, sins so aggravated and so provoking as mine, by giving me an awful sense of his absolute sovereignty from those words, Exodus xxxiii. 19. *I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.* Also Isaiah iv. 8. *For my thoughts are not your thoughts neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.* These considerations were so impressed on my mind, and struck such an awe upon my spirits, that I durst not any longer give way to my carnal reasonings; I thought I could commit my-

self to his sovereign pleasure let him do with me as seemed him good *.

AFTER some time my mother perceiving my concern, conversed very freely with me, and asked if I was not willing to accept of Christ to sanctify as well as to save me? I told her I desired this above all things. She then said he had certainly accepted of me, adding that it was Christ who had made me willing to close with him, and that he never made any soul thus willing, but he had first pardoned and accepted that soul. I shall never forget with what weight these words were impressed on my heart. I thought it was as a pardon sent immediately to me. I could not but say I was above all things desirous to be entirely subject to Christ in every power and faculty of my soul, that every thought might be brought into subjection to Christ, and nothing might remain in me contrary to him, but that there might be

* This was a remarkable instance of Christian submission and resignation, which shewed not only the truth, but strength of faith. And those who are thus enabled to go and venture themselves upon a God in Christ, have sufficient warrant to conclude that their state is safe, even when their frame is the least comfortable.

a perfect conformity to his image and will in all things.

AFTER this conversation I found great composure in my mind, believing that the Lord had created those desires in me which nothing but himself and the enjoyment of himself could satisfy, and that he would answer them with himself that he would not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, (Matth. xii. 20.) My delight now was in nothing else but meditating upon and admiring of the free and sovereign grace of God in Christ, which distinguished me from many others who had not so highly provoked him, having called me out of such gross darkness which I had been long in, and given me any glimmerings of the light, of the knowledge, of the glory of his grace. My desires greatly increased after further discoveries, and clearer light into the deep mysteries of the love and grace of God in Christ Jesus: and all diversions from these meditations were a burden.

O I then thought all old things were passed away, and every thing was become new! I experienced a universal change in my mind, will, and affections; the bent of them was turned another

way. The ordinances which were once irksome were above all things pleasant, and the return of sabbaths continually longed for. I was very thankful it was my duty as well as privilege to set apart the *whole* day for the worship and glory of my Lord *. I bewailed much that I could love him no more, that there was so much sin remaining in me, and which I found mixed with all that I did, and that I was not wholly taken up in those blessed and delightful employments, without the least interruption. O I longed for that state wherein all these clogs should be knocked off, and my soul set at liberty in the worship and praise of my God, being freed from corruptions within or temptations without.

* I can't help observing (and O that the Lord the spirit may impress it powerfully on the consciences of all whom it may concern !) how different her frame from many professors, who, through sloth and indolence, attend publick worship but one part of the Lord's day, as if they looked upon it as a perfect task or drudgery, and secretly said, *Behold what a weariness is it!* Mal. i. 13. Or as the prophet Amos describes their sad character, *When will the sabbath be gone, that we may set forth wheat?* &c. Amos viii. 5.

My soul was thus delightfully carried out for some time, in which I heard a discourse from those words, John xxi. 17. *Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.* The scope of this sermon was for a trial whether *our* appeal could be made to him who knows all things that we loved him? Under this his discourse I found my heart greatly carried out in love to Christ, in all his ordinances, and the discoveries made of his will therein. These subjects concerning the love of Christ and his peoples love to him being long continued one sermon after another, I found I sat under the word with great pleasure and enlarged affections.

AT this time my mother was perswading me to join in communion with some church, which greatly startled me at the first. I could by no means think of that, not apprehending myself to have come so far yet, I thought there must be something more in me, or I should eat and drink damnation to myself*. But being better

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informed

* This is a usual device of the devil's to prevent true believers joining in church-fellowship, suggesting that they must see themselves more worthy and prepared before they venture on this solemn ordinance. Whereas in fact that person comes most worthily to Christ and his table too, who is made most

informed both as to the nature and end of the ordinance, and that it was intended for the increase of grace and strength, and that it was a positive command of my Lord with whose will in all things I was very desirous to comply, I was at last prevailed with to venture on that great ordinance, and was much refreshed and satisfied in my renewed resignation and enlarged expectations of receiving all needful supplies, from him who is the head of the church. O the condescending love and grace of my redeemer represented to me in these transactions, how greatly did they delight and affect my soul! I wished I might have been always thus exercised, expecting with great pleasure the return of those seasons, wherein I might hope for further

most sensible of his own unworthiness. The best preparation that I know of is to see our own unpreparedness, and that the whole ground of our acceptance depends entirely on the blood and righteousness of a dear Redeemer. And that *damnation* the Apostle speaks of 1 Cor. xi. 29. which has struck so much terror into the minds of many, and over-awed them into a sinful neglect of their duty, does not intend eternal damnation, but some temporal judgment, chastisement, or correction, in a fatherly way, which the original word properly signifies, and is the only damnation the Lord's people are liable to, for there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, Rom. viii. 1.

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manifestations and larger communications of grace and love.

BUT after some time my affections began to cool. I had not such sweetness and enlargement in my approaches to God in publick, as I used to find. I thought the preaching more empty, and came short of what I found I wanted. This deadness continuing, filled me with no small concern, fearing I should fall off. I was very far from charging the ministry I sat under, but my own wicked wavering heart. I have often gone to the house of God with raised expectations of receiving those quickenings I used to be blessed with, but found sad disappointments. This frame of spirit as to publick worship was matter of continual mourning and bewailing in secret. I was often examining my heart as to its aims and ends in my publick approaches, and could not but conclude my desires were above all things to glorify my Lord in all his appointments, and to receive those blessings from him which might enable me so to do.

THE missing of the Lord's presence under the means, in the use of which he had commanded me to expect it, and which he had

heretofore in some measure vouchsafed was very grievous. I earnestly begged a discovery of every sin that might be hid from me, which might be the cause of this withdrawing. But the decay of my affections still remaining, it caused great misgivings of heart that things were not right with me. Yet still I had supports in my secret applications to God, that his grace would be sufficient for me, and that I should be kept by his almighty power through faith unto salvation, which encouragements kept me still waiting with hope that he would yet return and bless me.

AFTER some time being providentially brought to this place, I found the preaching of your * pastor so suited to my case, that I was greatly enlarged in thankfulness to God, who had so directed me. Those sermons upon Galat. vi. 3. *For if a man thinketh himself something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.* Though I had heard your minister before with great satisfaction, brought me to a resolution of

* The Rev. Mr. J. Gouge, it being the same church to which her sister Combe removed her communion. Both sisters had formerly belonged to some Presbyterian congregation, which was the reason of these accounts being given, upon their admission at Mr. Gouge's, who was of the independent persuasion, and a very valuable man.

sitting

sitting under his ministry. I do not question but you remember what unusual and deep heart-searching discourses they were. I wish I could express what they were to me. They razed me again to the very foundation, and discovered the many secret holds Satan had in my heart, which before I thought not of, and how many ways I was taking up in something which was nothing.

THESE discourses caused deep humblings of spirit, and enlarged desires after further enlightenings. O I found these things reached me! I needed to be led into the depths of my own deceitful heart, and thereby observe that secret proneness there was in me to be laying hold on something in self to rest upon and expect from. In short, I now saw that utter insufficiency and weakness in myself, and every thing done by myself to satisfy the cravings of my immortal soul, which I had not so much as once thought of before.

I HAVE been also led more to that fulness from whence only I can receive what may render me acceptable to the father, and have never found so much sweetness and solid satisfaction in my accesses to God, as when most sensible
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of my own unworthiness, and entire emptiness of any thing agreeable to him in myself, and all my performances, and when most apprehensive of that infinite fulness and suitableness of grace laid up in Christ Jesus, from whence I am commanded and encouraged to be continually receiving fresh supplies. O those infinite inexhaustible treasures! nothing! nothing! less can satisfy the restless cravings and pantings of my soul! By this preaching I have been continually led to this fresh spring that never fails and have experienced great quickenings in my applications to Christ, and comfortable rejoicings in him. Notwithstanding all those miserable defects and failures in my poor performances; this gives me comfort, that there is a perfect righteousness wrought out for me, which I may receive freely by faith, and therein stand compleat before God for ever.

THE insisting on such truths as these, which have a direct tendency to lead from self to Christ, by opening and unfolding the mysteries of grace laid up in him so admirably suited to answer all the necessities of poor helpless guilty creatures, I find above all things encourages me

to, and enlivens me in duty*. My low improvements under these suitable instructive helps fill me with mourning, to think there should be no greater establishment upon the sure foundation of a redeemer's righteousness, on which I hope I have been enabled to build.

AT times I can apprehend with some clearness that this righteousness was wrought out for me, and can apply to him with confidence and joy, as the *Lord my righteousness and strength*, and gladly hope that through *that* strength I shall be more than a conqueror over every disturbing corruption and temptation. Yea, that I shall see him shortly, as he is, in the full displays of the glory of that grace and love which I cannot now comprehend, and by the transforming sight be made like him. But O how short! how seldom are their interviews! my unbelieving heart still returns to its former darkness and distrust, and gives me frequent

* A plain proof that the doctrines of grace do not, neither can they, lead to licentiousness. No, wherever they come with power, I will venture to say they are the strongest motives that can be to universal holiness: the love of Christ *constraineth* us, (2 Cor. v. 14.) obliges and binds us to every duty. If a felt sense of this love does not, I am sure nothing can, nothing will.

occasions to bewail the fluctuations of my weak faith. O that it was stronger! that it was more stedfast! But blessed be his name in whom I put my entire trust, there is grace in him to help me under all decays and failings, through weakness. 'Tis from hence I receive strength to elevate and excite the acts of faith and love, when sunk so low that I cannot raise them. Yea, it is from the same fulness I receive grace to regulate the actings of grace, and to set my soul from time to time, in a right way of improving the grace I received, and for obtaining pardon for all my defects, as well as for the removing all my defilements *.

THESE are the truths that feed and support my faith, and without these were set home with power on my soul, I must give up, under the great aboundings of indwelling corruptions. I desire a submissive waiting for further manifestations of his love in his own time and

* She expresses herself here with so much judgment, as shews that she had not only a large acquaintance with the things of Christ, but a deep insight into herself, those secret workings of her own heart, and entire insufficiency to do any thing of herself agreeable to the words of our Lord to his disciples, John xv. 5. *Without me ye can do nothing.*

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way. And although I have not those constant shines of the light of God's countenance, with which some of his people are blessed, yet I humbly adore him for the little light he hath afforded me, and beg your prayers that I may be kept close to him, and have such constant discoveries as may strengthen my faith, by a close adherence to him and firm reliance on him, without wavering. But I am sensible that I am too apt to be looking off from the only support and foundation of my faith and hope, and to be depending on and expecting from the frame of my own spirit, and workings of my affections towards spiritual things *.

O the unsearchable deceitfulness of my heart! which is so many ways betraying me into an unbelieving temper of spirit. I find I need greater helps than those many who are more established, and I dare not neglect those helps which my Lord has provided for his church. I need to be watched over, and excited and encouraged under difficulties, from those expe-

* Christians are too apt to live upon their frames instead of Christ's fulness, which keeps them so low and lifeless, and lays the foundation of those endless complaints that are found among many. Though frames vary as the wind, yet this is the comfort, God is unchangeable, and the covenant is sure.

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riences which others have of the dealings of the Lord with them. I have been wishing for these advantages for a considerable time, being fully convinced that those who are members of his church should be building up one another. I bless the Lord that he has discovered his will to me in this point, and that he hath provided greater helps than what I had been before acquainted with for my furtherance in my progress to heaven. Accordingly I would cheerfully and thankfully fall in with his will herein, and so take hold of his covenant in this church, expecting the blessing promised to those that are planted in his house.

GERTRUDE CLARKSON.

THIS excellent woman died in London, April 23, 1701. Her funeral sermon was preached and printed by Mr. afterwards Dr. Ridgley, who was then pastor of that church to which she belonged, and who, among other things, observes the following concerning her. That her mind was rightly informed and richly furnished with experimental knowledge of the things of Christ, and of the work of grace, carried on with power in her soul. And although she had sometimes a well grounded hope,

hope, yea, a full persuasion of the love of God; yet so far was this from leading her to pride or carnal security, that it can scarce be conceived what low thoughts she had of the *best* of self, and what a deep sense of the power of indwelling sin, or with what sorrow lamented the same. What a firm dependance on Christ, as able to do nothing without him! how watchful over her actions and thoughts! and how much afraid of sin even of the iniquity of her holy things!

THERE was in her conversation a becoming mixture of gravity and pleasantness, not daring on the one hand to make things sacred, a prey to the exuberancies of wit and fancy, nor on the other, of giving the least occasion to their false conceit, who suppose that religion always chuses the dark retreat of a melancholy temper, or is directly opposite to what is chearful or agreeable in common conversation.

SHE was a conscientious attender on the ordinances of Christ, in season and out of season, valuing all opportunities wherein she might hope for further acquaintance with God; she called the sabbath her delight and rejoiced at the returns thereof. Her soul was very much
affected

affected with those doctrines that have a tendency to advance the sovereignty of divine grace, and to set forth the nothingness of the creature.

HER last sickness was short. She was on a sudden seized with a very painful distemper*, which she perceived to be the harbinger of death, but when it made its nearest approaches she declared, *it was welcome*. She did not fly from it as an enemy, nor see any thing affrighting in its countenance. When all about her were almost overwhelmed with grief, she was the only person that seemed unconcerned, being as willing to be gone as death was to call.

THOUGH her pain was violent for many hours, and very much hindered the desired composure of her thoughts, yet in this she was submissive to the divine will, and patient under his hand, But it pleased God to give her ease the remaining part of her time, when she took occasion to express the inward joy that she experienced. When cordials were applied for the refreshment of weak and fainting nature,

* The cholick, which carried her off in four days.

she

she said that she had better cordials to refresh her than those.

THE last two days of her life she seemed wholly unconcerned about, and quite disengaged from any thing in this world, as one that had taken her leave of every thing here below, and was at leisure for nothing but heavenly contemplation. Her discourse was very affecting. Whenever she spoke of herself 'twas with the most soul-humblin' expressions, but how often did she extol and admire the love of God in Christ! the same truths that she was refreshed with in life were her comfort and delight in death. She had the same self-abasing, yea, self-abhorring and grace-advancing thoughts. She had a full assurance of salvation, and an abundant entrance with a kind of triumph administered into it, often speaking in the words of the apostle, 2 Tim. i. 12. *I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.* And with joy unspeakable, making use of those words with application to herself, Jude v. 24. *Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you fault-*

less before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.*

HER inward peace was too great to be expressed, as she said, *Time will fail me to express what comfort I have.* When nature was very weak, and her strength and spirits exhausted, she blessed God that *her faith did not fail.* No; *that* was strongest when outward comforts were at a very low ebb, and she had hereby those clear manifestations of Christ, and soul refreshing prelibations of glory, which were a kind of heaven in her way to it. Her last words were with a rapture of admiration, *O those rays of glory!* Thus her soul took its flight into the bosom of Jesus, to enjoy what it had long waited for, namely, further discoveries of his love, and to be cloathed with immortality and enjoy eternal life.

Note, Mr. Clarkson had a third daughter, named Katharine, who never was married, she was eminent for piety, and lived many years

* These words were the subject of her funeral discourse, being often repeated by her in her illness, and a wonderful support to faith in her last moments,

at

of Mrs. GERTRUDE CLARKSON. 69

at Hitchin, where she died, Jan. 11, 1757, aged 84 years. Her frame in her last illness was comfortable, and her soul longed earnestly to be gone. A discourse was preached at her interment, from Psalm xxxvii. 37. *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.*





Memoirs of Mrs. Mary Churchman, relating to her Conversion, and the difficulties she underwent from her own family, until the Lord appeared in her favour, in turning every one of them to himself.

A GREEABLE to what my parents educated me in I was zealous for the established church, and thought all fanaticks, who dissented from it. I had as much prejudice against dissenters, and as great an inclination to persecute as Paul had. There lay a way through my father's yard for Mrs. M. a godly woman, to go to the meeting, which she did every Lord's day. I really thought it my duty to set his great dog to molest her, and used sometimes to encourage him for half a mile together, with the most bitter invectives, such as saying my dog would smell the blood of a fanatic, &c. The cur, though cursed to others, yet, such was the preventing providence of God,

God, that he never once fastened upon this gracious person, notwithstanding, for some time, I constantly made it my business to set him upon her.

WHEN I was about eighteen years of age it pleased the Lord to lay on me a languishing fit of sickness, which raised in me some promises of a new life, and when recovered, at the persuasion of a neighbour, who had been very useful to me in my illness, I went with her to hear that great man of God Mr. Holcroft *. He preached powerfully of hell and judgment, which made me tremble and secretly wish I had never came there. Every time he named the name of Christ it was terrible as the thunder and lightning upon mount Sinai. I wished myself covered with the mountains, and looked upon Christ as my terrible judge and enemy. This trouble I vented in floods of tears, and many wishes that I had never been born, and that I had never came there, for now thought I, they will think me one of themselves, which I at that time was fully resolved against. I seemed now to like their persons worse than

* Mr. Holcroft was one of the ejected ministers, and afterwards pastor of a congregational church, in Cambridgeshire, in which county as well as in several other places he was made remarkably useful, both for the conversion and comfort of many.

ever. Satan also suggested, what would my relations say? they must never know that I had been at a meeting, and the like.

THUS in great hurry and confusion, I sat till service was ended. After sermon, staying for my neighbour, the minister came to me, and asked where I lived? who I was? and whether I knew anything of the Lord Jesus Christ? &c. But such was my ignorance, and such the hurry and confusion of my mind, that dark was my answer. I told him I believed the world was at an end. Home I came, and not one word did I speak to my neighbour, but was very angry in my mind that she should ever ask me to come amongst the dissenters. I grew worse and worse, insomuch that my mother sent for a doctor, fearing that I should be melancholy, which indeed greatly increased upon me. This was in the reign of king Charles II. at which time they were bringing in popery a great pace.

THE next opportunity which presented I had an inclination to go to the meeting again, which I did, but very privately. My mother began to mistrust me and repeated her charge, warning me not to go among such sort of creatures as fanaticks, for, I believe, said she, they
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bewitch people into their persuasions. However I went on a week day, and the same minister preached from those words, Cant. ii. 16. *My beloved is mine and I am his, he feedeth among the lillies.*

HE was a good Samaritan to me that day. The spirit of the Lord shone round about me. O then I saw the Lord Jesus become my husband! he was to me as a hiding place from the storm and tempest to which I saw my guilty and polluted nature had exposed me. O happy day indeed! I found him who a little before appeared as a terrible judge was now become my beloved, and I knew that I was his. O inexpressible joy! he was as a bundle of myrrh to my soul. I had not only here a little and there a little, but I had every where much. I had every thing I wanted to my decayed spirits. I well knew I should meet with hard things from my relations, but could now pray, *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.* Luke xxiii. 34.

As soon as my father and mother knew that I went to the meeting, Satan was in a great rage. My father was then high constable, and had an order from the justices to return all the names of them who frequented the meetings. This made it an hard thing for his own daughter

to be a fanatick, which was what he could not bear. And this also increased my difficulty, in getting out on a Lord's day, which notwithstanding I sometimes did, and have walked eight, ten, yea, twelve miles to a meeting. If my father at any time understood where I was gone, he spent the day in nothing but oaths and curses, and resolves to murder me. My mother, though an enemy to fanaticks, would frequently send a servant to meet me before I could reach home, to tell me not to appear till my father was gone to bed; and I often hid himself in a wood stack, where I have seen him pass by, with a naked knife in his hand, declaring he would kill me before he slept.

IN this bondage I lived for one year, but the Lord carried on his work with much power, and enabled me to declare in Zion what he had done for my soul, which I did on a Lord's day as the manner then was. I had some fear indeed lest my parents should hear of it, which they did within a fortnight after, by means of a basket woman, who asked my mother if she had not a daughter? she answered, yes; O, said the woman, I heard her preach such a sermon

mon at Mildred *, as raised the admiration of all who heard her. This my mother obliged her to attest before my father and me, who no sooner heard of it, but he immediately turned me out of door, not suffering me to carry any thing with me, except the clothes on my back.

I WENT to a godly gentleman's about four miles distant from my father's, who had often told me I should be welcome to his house, where my employ should be to be the governess to his seven children. But there the Lord was pleased to try me greatly at my first setting out; my mistress, though a good woman, soon became uneasy, thinking her husband shewed me too much favour. She was suffered to carry it very cruelly towards me, ordering my lodging with the meanest of the servants, and my diet likewise as coarse as theirs. It being a time of scarcity of provisions, we under-servants lived chiefly upon barley bread. I was obliged to borrow for necessary change of linen, nor did I know

* Near Melbourn, in Cambridgeshire, where her experience was given in, and which the woman meant by her preaching a sermon.

for months together, what it was to have one penny in my pocket.

THIS great change of living, together with my grief at being banished from my father's house, brought me so low, that a sore fit of sickness ensued. My life not being long expected, the gentlewoman sent a messenger to acquaint my mother that I had a great desire to see her, but as soon as the messenger informed my father, he replied, if he did not immediately get out of his yard he would shoot him dead. However, about a fortnight after my mother sent me a box of wearing apparel, which I received with these words on my thoughts, Matth. vi. 32. *For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.*

I lived in this place with difficulty three years, but in all that time never knew what it was to have one barren sabbath. I thought my mercies equal to the children of Israel's. I gathered my manna on the sabbath, and it always lasted sweet and good, it never cloyed, and I was always hungry, insomuch that I thought if seeing and hearing the saints sometimes here was so pleasant, what must it be to dwell for ever with them above! I was placed indeed
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among those where I had frequent opportunities of being convinced that good men are subject to like passions with others. This grieved me, but God did me good by such disappointments, for hereby he brought me more off from the creature to the creator.

THE year following providence placed me twenty miles another way, where I obtained a Joseph's character, and a Joseph's promotion, being greatly valued by many noble families, and especially the lady M. who told me she loved me years before she was personally acquainted with me; she gave me of her liberality and maintained christian communion with me. One remark this lady made I well remember, speaking of the suitableness of the spirits, applying the word to all ranks and conditions, it is well said, saith she, in holy writ, not *many* noble are called; had it been expressed not *any* noble, what a condition must I have been in!

PERSECUTION now came on apace, the dissenters could have no meetings but in woods and corners. I myself have seen our companies often alarmed with drums and soldiers; every one was fined five pounds a month for being in
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their company. Here God left me to stagger; Satan suggested if you give your body to be burned, and have not charity, it is nothing, (1 Corinth. xiii. 3.) But the greater the temptation the greater was the deliverance, from those words, Revelat. vii. 14. *These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the lamb.* Also chap. vi. 11. *And white robes were given to every one of them, &c.* Blessed be God, Satan by this assault only bruised my heel, my head remained whole.

WHILE I was in this family the commissioners came and searched for ministers. Mr. B. (the gentleman of the house) and Mr. Holcroft were asleep in a private arbour. I ran with some difficulty and awoke them, and they made their escape through the hedges, but as I returned the officers surprized me. They went and found some slips of their clothes on the hedges, which made them roar like bloodhounds, after which they came and seized a whole house of goods. These men were major T. and colonel C.

BUT O! the great trial now came on, they found and seized my beloved pastor Mr. Holcroft,

croft, and carried him to Cambridge castle, but even there God appeared wonderfully for him; he preached, and many souls were converted in that place. Now God was with us much; he was indeed as a pillar of fire by night, and a cloud by day. And O how do I remember his loving kindness to *me* the least of all saints; he not only delivered me from fears, but even death itself, nay the very flames with which we were threatened were made familiar to me. I was enabled to say, O death where is thy sting? The Lord was a covert from that storm and tempest, and a strong rock in that day of trouble.

Mr. B. with whom I lived, had a call to Holland, and as the persecution was very threatening in England, he thought it his duty to accept the call. He gave me an invitation to go with him, assuring me that all things should be in common. As I well knew my circumstances were very precarious, not having any where to hide my head, when this worthy family was gone, this drew me into great straits. I sought the Lord time after time on this account, and it seemed as if he was providing for me in another land. Grace taught me my duty to my parents, though they were enemies to the cross of Christ.

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Accordingly I acquainted them with this invitation, and that I should comply with it unless their commands were to the contrary. I added in my letter I should be all obedience to them, saving in matters relating to my God, and though I had not been permitted to see them seven years past, yet could assure them my affections for them were the same as ever. I begged they would consider of it, and let me know in eight days time, for all things were ready to embark in a fortnight.

Not hearing from them in the time I set, I took their silence for a consent, and so prepared all things ready for my journey, and set out with my kind friends. Just before we reached Harwich, where we were to take shipping, a messenger from my father overtook me with a letter, the contents of which were as follows, That if I would come home I should have my liberty to worship God in my own way, but as to my leaving the land, this was what they could not bear, therefore without fail I must come back with the messenger; which I did. Great was the sorrow of parting with my friends, but my duty to my parents surmounted all.

I no sooner entered my father's house but my mother in receiving me fainted away. My
father

father also, though a man of great spirits, offered to fall on his knees to ask my pardon for his former cruelty. O amazing work of sovereign grace! when our ways please the Lord he makes even our enemies to be at peace with us. My father immediately told me I should have my liberty in matters relating to my God. I then humbly offered my obedience to them both on my knees. At supper there was not a mouthful eaten but with tears. I well knew my God had appeared to my father on my behalf, as he did to Laban of old, and applied Jacob's promise to myself, Gen. xxxii. 12. *Thou saidst I will surely do thee good.* The next sabbath my father came into my chamber by break of day, and told me I should have a horse and a man to wait on me to the meeting, which was at a place called Taft. Mr. Oddy * preached from those words, Psalm cx. 3. *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.* Then I could see electing love, the prime cause of all Gods dealings with me.

THERE now appeared a great reformation in the whole family. My father feared to

* Assistant, or fellow pastor with Mr. Holcroft.

sin,

sin, for fear of grieving his daughter, and in a little time left off drinking, which was the forerunner of all his other evils. Now I thought I could give my very body to be burned for the souls of my dear relations. The Lord granted my request on their behalf. In a few years I had not only the pleasure of seeing the conversion of my three brothers, but of seeing them also eminently useful. I found my God reserved his greatest mercies for my greatest trials, for at the death of my dear sister I had not only the comfort of seeing her conversion, but the great satisfaction of seeing my dear father and mother also converted to the faith of Jesus, though at the eleventh hour. Yea such was the power and goodness of God, that he left not so much as a *hoof* behind in the whole family.

SURELY now I may say that nothing but goodness and mercy hath followed me all the days of my life. When we had free liberty under our great deliverer from popery and slavery, King William, many were the favours which I enjoyed. God gave me the best and tenderest of husbands; a prophet of the Lord indeed, whose good instructions abide with my children to this day. In short, the Lord has sanctified
every

every trial to me, and followed me with pleasure and comfort in my old age.

MARY CHURCHMAN.

THIS excellent christian was subject to much affliction of body in the latter part of her life, but, in the general, she was very lively in her soul. At the age of seventy-four, she had some near views of her approaching dissolution; and the last time she came down stairs, which was four days before her death, she said, that her God might leave her to the trial of her faith, but his covenant was unalterable; and then further declared, that now, for months past, she had conversed with her Lord, face to face, in her private retirement, yea, saith she, such hath been my near communion with my God, that he hath already given me the white robe of Christ's righteousness, as an earnest of my standing before his throne.

HER memory was very quick, and her understanding clear; she gave choice advice to her children, with the utmost caution and tenderness. She said that she had not the least concern about future events, for now she believed

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decrees of God, and knew that he did all things well. It rejoiced her that Christ was the great God, and the king of peace, and that the government was upon his shoulders. The evening before she died she called one of her children, and, though her speech a little faltered, she expressed herself thus: I have now, faith she, new comfort, which surpasseth all my former experience, from those words, Heb. vii. 25. *Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.* O, said she, that word *uttermost* is gone into heaven before me! I now remember the days of his espousals, when I followed him in the wilderness, and when I was banished from my father's house, *then* my God saved me to the uttermost; he saved me to the uttermost in all his providences, when in a married state; he saved me to the uttermost in all my children; he saved me to the uttermost in the state of my widowhood; he hath saved me to the uttermost in all my afflictions, and now he saves me to the uttermost in my sickness; yea, this high priest saves my faith against all the assaults of Satan, on my death-bed. As man he suffered, as God he saves to the uttermost.

AFTER this she turned herself to her neighbours, who were weeping, and said, Here is a word for *you*; Christ saves sinners to the uttermost: and then, addressing herself to her child, she said, O my dear child! I want to take you with me to heaven, but Christ will save you to the uttermost. You have been the gift of God to me, but, wherein you have been useful take heed of pride, for you have a corrupt nature. She then gave charge concerning her funeral; and, after having added, God will be with you my child, fell as it were asleep in the arms of her daughter; thus the Lord favoured her with an easy passage to the mansions of glory. She departed this life, Jan. 12, 1734, in the 80th year of her age, and was interred at Saffron-Walden, in Essex.



*The singular Experience and great Sufferings
of Mrs. Agnes Beaumont, who was
born at * Edworth, in the county of Bed-
ford, as written by herself.*

SINCE I was first awakened the Lord has been pleased to exercise me with many and great trials, but, blessed be his gracious name, he hath caused all to work together for my advantage, and given me occasion to say, *It is good for me that I have been afflicted*, Psalm cxix. 71. O! how great has the kindness of the Lord been to me in afflictive dispensations! never leaving me without his teachings and comfortable presence when in the midst of them. I have often observed the more trouble I have had, either from within, or from without, the more I have found of God's presence, when I have

* A village about seven miles from Hitchin, in Hertfordshire.

been

been helped to keep close to him by frequent fervent prayer ; and, O ! how sweet is his presence to a poor soul, when surrounded with sorrows on every side !

FOR my part I can say with David, I have found trouble and sorrow : God only knows the fore temptations which I have waded through, some outward but more inward. O the fiery darts which have been shot from hell against me ! But, on the other hand, none knows, but God, that sweet communion and consolation which he hath graciously afforded me in those hours of trouble. I have experienced such comfort and enlargement of heart, such fervent desires after Christ and his grace, as hath often made me thank God for trouble, because I found it drove me nearer to himself, and the throne of his grace. The Lord has made such seasons praying, heart-searching and soul-humbling times.

BUT there is one thing more especially in which I have great cause to admire the goodness of God, namely, that before a trial came I usually had strong consolation from above, inasmuch that I have expected some trouble would ensue, and it hath often proved according to
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my thoughts. One scripture after another would run in my mind, for several days together, suggesting something that I was shortly to meet with and prepare for, which has drove me into some secret corner or other to cry to the Lord to be with me; and, O how has he in such seasons, as it were, taken me into the mount! My soul has been so raised and comforted as if for a while out of the body. Many times in a day has he sent me into his banquetting-house, and his banner over me was love, under which indulgence, being still kept in a humble frame, I never was denied the presence of my Lord when waiting at the throne of his grace, which rendered those seasons so delightful that I longed for their return. It cannot be expressed what sweetness there is in his presence, and in one promise applied by his spirit to the soul. It turns weeping into rejoicing, as, blessed be God, I have experienced in that great and fiery trial of my father's death, which I am now to relate.

ABOUT a quarter of a year before the Lord was pleased to remove my father, I had great and frequent enjoyments of God, and he was pleased to pour out a spirit of grace and of supplication upon me, in a very wonderful manner,
both

both day and night. There was scarce a corner in the house, barns, stables, closes or hedges, where I did not pour out my soul to God. And sometimes ere I have rose from my knees I have been as if in heaven, and as if my very heart would break with joy and consolation, which hath caused floods of tears, with admiration at the love of Christ to such a great sinner as myself. I have frequently wept and cried for joy, at which times some who saw me would say, Why do you grieve so, Agnes? are you minded to kill yourself with sorrow? When, indeed, mine were tears of joy and not of grief, flowing from a sense of the love of Christ to my soul. Before the Lord brought this approaching trial I had many scriptures to shew me I had some difficulty to meet with, at which I sometimes thought my heart would sink, but presently I had one promise or another to bear me up; I concluded I had some hard thing to meet with from the following word, which frequently darted into my mind, Psalm l. 15. *And call upon me in the day of trouble I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.* Wherever I went this scripture followed me. I concluded it must point at something future, because for the present I found more joy than trouble. Also that word was much on my thoughts, Isaiah xliii. 2.

When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee, &c. With many others of the same nature, in which I saw contained both bitter and sweet.

I HAD also many dreams, some of which I believe were from God *. In some of them I have had fears of losing my life, or narrowly escaping with it: in others, that men run after me to murder me. And, in some others I have thought myself tried before a judge and jury, and barely came off with my life. One of the dreams was very remarkable, which I told to a friend, who reminded me of it after my father's death. I thought there grew an old apple-tree in my father's yard full of fruit, and one night, about midnight, there came a sudden storm of wind and blew down this tree. At the sight hereof I was sorely troubled, running to it, as it lay on the ground, in order to lift it up that it might grow again in its former place, but though I lifted first with one arm and then with the other, with all my might, I

* *For God speaketh once, yea twice, in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed, &c. Job xxxiii. 14. 15.*

could

could not so much as stir it ; therefore leaving it turned up by the roots, I ran to my brother and called his men, but when they came, they could not replant it, and it sorely grieved me to think this tree should be blown down, while others were left standing.

Soon after this dream there was a church-meeting at Gam'gay *, about a week before which I was much in prayer, especially for two things: the one, that the Lord would incline the heart of my father to let me go, which he sometimes refused, and, in those days, it was like death to me to be kept from such a meeting; I have found by experience that to pray hard was the most successful method of obtaining my father's consent, for when I have not thus prayed I have found it very difficult to prevail. The other request was that the Lord would go with me, and that I might enjoy his presence there, at his table, that, as in many times past, it might be a sealing ordinance to my soul, and that I might have such a sight of a bleeding and dying Saviour, as might melt my heart and enlarge it in love to his name.

* Gamlingey; a place where some good people lived who were members of Mr. Bunyan's church of Bedford, and to whom he sometimes went to break bread.

THE

THE Lord was pleased to grant me my requests. Upon asking my father indeed he seemed unwilling at first, but upon my pleading with him, and telling him that I would do all my work in the morning before I went out, and return home at night, I gained his consent. Friday being come I prepared every thing ready to set out. My father enquired who carried me? I told him I thought Mr. Wilson of Hitchin, to which he said nothing *. I went to my brother's and waited expecting to meet Mr. Wilson; but he not coming it cut me to the heart, and fearing I should not go, I burst into tears, for my brother had told me that his horses were all at work, and that he could not spare one more than what he and my sister were to ride on, and, it being the depth of winter, I could not walk thither.

Now I was afraid that all my prayers on this account were lost; my way seemed to be hedged up with thorns. I waited with many a longing look and with a sorrowful heart, under my sad disappointment. O thought I that the Lord

* This Mr. Wilson was the first pastor of the baptist-church at Hitchin, suffered imprisonment for the sake of the gospel, and was grandfather to the late Rev. Mr. Samuel Wilson of London.

would

would but put it into the heart of some person to come and convey me thither. Thus I still waited, but with my heart full of fears. At last quite unexpected came Mr. Bunyan. The sight of him caused a mixture both of joy and of grief. I was glad to see him, but was afraid he would not be willing to take me up behind him, and how to ask him I knew not. At length I desired my brother to do it, which he did; but, Mr. Bunyan answered, with some degree of roughness, No; I will not carry her. These words were cutting indeed, and made me weep bitterly: my brother perceiving my trouble said, If you do not carry her you will break her heart: but he made the same reply, * adding, "Your father will be grievous angry if I should." I will venture that, said I. And thus, with much entreaty, he was prevailed on; and, O how glad was I to think I was going!

Soon after we set out my father came to my brother's, and asked his men who his daughter rode behind? they said, Mr. Bunyan; upon

* A certain person in the neighbourhood, one Mr. F. who is often referred to afterwards in this relation, had slandered Mr. Bunyan, and set her father against him, endeavouring to make his vile calumnies pass for truth.

hearing

hearing of this his anger was greatly enflamed ; he ran down the close, thinking to overtake me and pull me off the horse, but we were gone out of his reach.

I HAD not rode far before my heart began to be lifted up with pride at the thoughts of riding behind this servant of the Lord, and was pleased if any looked after us. Indeed I thought myself very happy that day ; first that it pleased God to make way for my going, and then that I should have the honour to ride behind Mr. Bunyan. My pride soon had a fall, for in coming to Gam'gay we were met by a clergyman who knew us both ; he looked very hard at us as we rode along, and soon after raised a vile scandal upon us, though, blessed be God, it was false *.

THE meeting began not long after we got thither ; and the Lord made it a sweet season to my soul indeed. O it was a feast of fat things ! I sat under his shadow with great delight ! When at the Lord's table, I found such a return of prayer that I was scarce able to bear up under

* This clergyman usually preached at Edworth, the place where she dwelt.

it. I was, as it were, carried up to heaven, and had such a sight of the Saviour, as even broke my heart in pieces. O! how I then longed to be with Christ! How willingly would I have died in the place, and gone immediately to glory. A sense of my sins, and of his dying love, made me love him, and long to be with him. I have often thought of his goodness in his remarkable visit to my soul that day, but he knew the temptations I was to meet with the very same night and a few days after. I have seen the bowels of his compassion towards me in these fresh manifestations of his love before I was tried. This was infinite condescension indeed!

THE meeting being ended I began to think how I should get home, for Mr. Bunyan was not to go by Edworth, and having promised to return that night, I was filled with many fears lest I should break my word. I enquired of several persons if they went my way; but, no one could assist me except a young woman, who lived near a mile wide of my father's house. As the road was very dirty and deep I was afraid to venture behind her; but at last I did, and she set me down about a quarter of a mile from my home, from whence I hastened through the dirt,
hoping

hoping to be there before my father was in bed; but, on coming to the door I found it locked, and seeing no light my heart began to sink, for I perceived what I was like to meet with. However I called to my father, who answered, Who is there? to which I said, 'Tis I, father, come home wet and dirty, pray let me in. He replied, Where you have been all day you may go at night; and with many such sayings he discovered great anger, because of my riding behind Mr. Bunyan, declaring that I should never come within his doors any more, unless I would promise never to go after that man again. I stood at the chamber window pleading to be let in; I begged, I cried, but all in vain, for instead of yielding to my importunity, he bid me be gone from the window, or else he would rise and put me out of the yard. I then stood silent a while, and that thought pierced my mind; how if I should come at last when the door is shut, and Christ should say unto me, *Depart!* Matth. xxv. 10, 11, 12:

At length, seeing my father refused to let me in, it was put into my heart to spend that night in prayer. I could indeed have gone to my brother's, who lived about a quarter of a mile off, and where I might have proper accommodations.

modations. No, thought I, into the barn I will go and cry to heaven, that Jesus Christ would not shut me out at the last day, and that I may have some fresh discoveries of his love to my soul. I did so, and, though naturally of a timorous temper, and many frightful things presented themselves to my mind, yet one scripture after another gave me encouragement. Such as Matth. vi. 6. *Pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.* Also Jer. xxxiii. 3. *Call upon me and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not.* And with many such good words was I comforted.

BEING thus in the barn and a very dark night, I was again assaulted by Satan ; but, having received strength from the Lord and his word, I spake out, (as I remember) saying, Satan, my father hath thee in a chain ; thou canst not hurt me. I then returned to the throne of grace ; and, indeed, it was a blessed night to my soul, a night to be remembered to the end of my life, and I hope I shall never forget it ; it was surely a night of prayer, yea, and of praise too, when the Lord was pleased to keep all fears from my heart. Surely he was with me in a wonderful manner ! O the heart-ravishing visits he gave me !

me! and that spirit of faith in prayer which he poured out upon me! It froze very hard that night, but I felt no cold, although the dirt was frozen on my shoes in the morning!

WHILST thus most delightfully engaged, that scripture came with mighty power on my soul, 1 Peter iv. 12. *Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you.* This word *beloved* made such melody in my heart as is not to be expressed, but the rest of words occasioned some dread; yet, still that first word *beloved* sounded louder than all the rest, and was much in my mind the whole night afterward. I saw that I was to meet with both bitter and sweet when I directed my cries to the Lord to stand by and to strengthen me, which he graciously did with many a blessed promise before the morning light; and to be the *beloved of God* was my mercy whatever difficulties I endured; nevertheless I began once to be a little dejected, being grieved to think that I should lose my father's love, but this led me to the Lord to beg that I might not lose his love too, and that good word was immediately given me, John xvi. 27. *The Father himself loveth you.* O blessed be God, thought I, then it is enough; do with me what seemeth thee good!

WHEN

WHEN the morning light appeared, I peeped through the cracks of the barn to watch my father's opening the door. Presently he came out and locked it after him, which I thought looked very dark, apprehending from hence he was resolved I should not go in, but still that word *beloved*, &c. sounded in my heart. He soon came into the barn, and seeing me in my riding dress made a stand, when I thus addressed him; A good morning to you, father, I have had a cold night's lodging here, but God has been good to me, else I should have had a worse. He said it was no matter. I prayed him to let me go in, saying, I hope father you are not angry with me, and kept following him about the yard as he went to fodder the cows; notwithstanding this he would not regard me, but the more I entreated him the more his anger rose against me, declaring that I should never enter his house again, unless I would promise not to go to the meeting as long as he lived. I replied, Father, my soul is of too much worth to do this; can you stand in my stead and answer for me at the great day? if so, I will obey you in this demand, as I do in all other things; yet I could not prevail.

AT last some of my brother's men came into the yard, and, seeing my case, at their return reported that their old master had shut Agnes out of doors. Upon hearing of this my brother was greatly concerned, and came to my father and endeavoured to prevail with him to be reconciled, but he grew more angry with him than with me, and at last would not hear him; on which my brother said, Go home with me sister, you will catch your death with cold; but I refused, still hoping to be more successful in a farther application, I therefore continued following my father in the yard, crying and hanging about him, and saying, Pray father let me go in, &c. I have since wondered how I durst be thus bold, my father being of a hasty temper, insomuch that his anger has often made me glad to get out of his sight, though, when his passion was over, few exceeded him in good nature.

AT length I began to be faint and cold, it being a very sharp morning, I was also grieved for being the occasion of keeping my father in the cold so long, for he kept walking about the yard, and declared that he would not go into the house while I was there. I therefore went to my brothers, and obtained some refreshment
and

and warmth ; then I retired and poured out my soul to God, who was pleased to continue on me a spirit of grace and of supplication, and forsake me not in this day of great trouble.

ABOUT noon I asked my sister to go with me to my father's, which she readily did, and finding him in the house and the door locked, we went to the window. My sister said, Now father I hope your anger is over, and you will let my sister come in, entreating him to be reconciled, while I burst out with many tears to see him so angry. I do not think fit to mention all he said, but among other things he protested that he would not give me one penny so long as he lived, no, nor when he died neither, but that he would sooner leave his substance to a stranger than to me, &c. These expressions were cutting, and made my heart sink ; thought I what will become of me ? To go to service and work hard is a new thing to me who am very young ; what shall I do ? yet still I thought I had a good God to go to, and that was then a very seasonable word, Psalm xxvii. 10. *When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.*

PERCEIVING my sister's strong pleadings were vain, I desired my father to give me my bible, if he would not please to let me in; which he also refused, saying, That he was resolved I should not have a penny nor a penny's worth as long as he lived, &c. On this I went home with my sister, bitterly weeping, and withdrew into her chamber, where the Lord gave hopes of a better inheritance. O now I was willing to go to service and to be stript of all for Christ! I saw that I had a better portion than that of silver or gold, and was enabled to believe I should never want.

My inclination was to go to my father once more, and since he was so very angry both with my brother and sister, I concluded to go alone. Upon coming to the door I found it partly open, the key being on the outside, and my father within. I pushed the door gently and was about to enter, which he perceiving, ran hastily to shut it, and had I not instantly withdrew one of my legs had been between the door and the threshold. I would not be so uncivil to my father as to lock him into his own house, however having this opportunity I took the key, intending when he was gone out to venture in and lie at his mercy. After a while he came, and
looking

looking behind the house, and seeing me standing in a narrow passage by a pond, laid hold on me, saying, Hussy! give me the key quickly, or else I will throw you into the pond. I immediately resigned it with silence and sadness.

It appearing in vain to contend I went down the closes to a wood side, with sighs and groans and a heart full of sorrow, when that scripture came again into my mind, Jer. xxxiii. 3. *Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not.* The night was dark, but I kept on to the wood, where I poured out my soul to God with many tears. And that word also greatly comforted me, Psalm xxxiv. 15. *The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry.* I believed his ears were open to a poor disconsolate creature, such as myself, and that his heart was towards me. And that was a wonderful word at this time, Isaiah lxiii. 9. *In all their affliction he was afflicted* *.

H 3

I

* Who can forbear to remark the passages which were, all along, brought to the mind of this gracious woman? How exceeding pertinent and seasonable; no parts

I STAID in this place so long as gave great concern to my brother and sister, who had sent one of their men to know whether my father had let me in; and understanding he had not, they went about seeking me, but they could not find me. At length having spread my case before the Lord I returned to my brothers, fully determined not to yield to my father's request if I begged my bread in the streets. I was so strongly fixed in the resolution that I thought nothing could move me; yet, alas! like Peter, I was a poor weak creature, as will presently be seen.

THIS was Saturday night. The next morning I said to my brother, let us call on my father as we go to the meeting, but, upon his telling me this would but further provoke him, we forbore. As we went along he said, Sister you are now brought upon the stage to act for Christ, I pray God help you to bear your testimony for him, I would by no means have you consent to my fathers terms. No brother,

parts of scripture could be better adapted to her case and circumstances throughout the whole of her troubles. And, may not this be esteemed one evidence of their being sealed on her heart by the spirit of the Lord?

I replied, I will sooner beg my bread from door to door. While I sat at meeting, my mind was hurried, as no wonder, considering my case; but service being ended I again made the proposal to call on my father in our way home. We did so, and found him in the yard. Before we came quite to him my brother repeated his admonition to me, though I thought I stood in no need of his counsel on this particular. He talked very mildly to my father, pleading with him to be reconciled, but perceiving he still retained his anger, I whispered and desired my brother to go home. No, said he, not without you. I said, I will come presently; on which he went, though (as he told me afterwards) with many fears lest I should comply, but I then thought I could as soon part with my life.

My brother being gone I stood pleading with my father, and said, Father I will serve you in anything that lies in my power, I only desire liberty to hear God's word on his own days grant me this and I ask no more. Father, (continued I) you cannot answer for my sins or stand in my stead before God, I must look to the salvation of my own soul, &c. He replied, if I would promise never to go to a meeting as long as he lived, I should then go into the house, and

he would provide for me as his own child; if not, I should never have one fathing from him. Father, said I, my soul is of more worth than so, I dare not make you such a promise; upon this his anger was greatly inkindled, and he bid me be gone, for he was resolved what to do; therefore promise me that you will never go to the meeting again, and I will give you the key, repeating these words several times, holding it out to me, and urging me to promise, and I as often refusing, till at last his wrath increased. What do you say? if you now refuse to comply you shall never be offered it more, and I am determined you shall never come within my doors again as long as I live. While I thus stood crying by him he repeated the same expressions; What do you say hussy? will you promise or not? Being thus urged, at last I answered, Well father I will promise you never to go to a meeting again as long as you live, without your consent. Hereupon he gave me the key and I went into the house.

BUT O! soon after I had entered the door, that awful scripture was brought to my mind, Matth. x. 33. *Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.* Also verse 37. *He that loveth father*
ther

ther or mother more than me is not worthy of me.
O thought I what will become of me! what have I done this night! I was so filled with terror that I was going to run out of the house again, but I thought this would not alter what I had done. Now, alas! all my comforts were gone, and, in their room, nothing but grief and guilt and rendings of conscience! In this instance I saw what all my resolutions were come to; even nothing. This was Lord's day night, and a black night it was to me.

In a little time my father came in and behaved with affection; he bid me get him some supper which I did. He also told me to come and eat with him, but it was a bitter supper to me. My brother's heart ached when he saw I did not follow him, fearing I should promise, and not coming to his house, was ready to conclude I had done so. But no tongue can express what a doleful condition I was in. I hardly durst look up to God for mercy. Now I thought I must hear the word no more. What good would it do me if my father could give me his house full of silver and gold! Thus I went about reflecting on my condition, and sorrowing till almost spent with my grief.

ON Monday I withdrew into the barn to pray and give vent to my sorrow ; when, as I stood sighing, with my hand inclined to the wall, and crying out, Lord what shall I do ? those words surprized me, 1 Cor. x. 13. *There shall be a way to escape that you may be able to bear it.* Lord ! thought I, what way wilt thou make for my escape ? wilt thou make my father willing to let me go to thine ordinances ? if thou dost, still what a wretch was I thus to deny Christ ! In the evening as we were sitting by the fire, my father asked me what was the matter ? I burst into tears, saying, O father ! I am distressed at the thoughts of my promise not to go to a meeting again without your consent. He was so moved that he wept like a child, bidding me not let that trouble me for we should not disagree, at which I was a little comforted, and said, Pray father forgive me wherein I have been undutiful to you. He then told me with tears how much he was troubled for me that night he shut me out of doors, insomuch that he could not sleep, adding, it was my riding behind John Bunyan that made him so angry *.

THE

* Some evil-minded men of the town, (as hinted before) especially Mr. F. had set her father against Mr. Bunyan, for in time past he had heard him preach,

THE greatest part of the next day, being Tuesday, I spent in prayer and weeping, with bitter lamentations, humbling myself before the Lord for what I had done, and begging I might be kept by his grace and spirit from denying him and his ways for the future. Before night he brought me out of this horrible pit and set my feet upon a rock, enabling me to believe the forgiveness of all my sins, by sealing many precious promises home on my soul. I could now look back with comfort on the night I spent in the barn; the sweet relish of that blessed and *beloved* return, and I believed that Jesus Christ was the same yesterday, to day, and for ever; and that scripture was much in my mind, Job, v. 19. *He shall deliver thee in six troubles, yea in seven there shall no evil touch thee.* Also Deut. xxxiii. 27. *The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.*

preach, and had been much melted under the word; he would pray and frequently go to the meetings. Yea, and when his daughter was first under spiritual concern he had very great awakenings himself, and would say to some of the neighbours, My daughter can scarce eat, drink, or sleep, and I have lived these threescore years, and have scarce ever thought of my soul, &c.

MY

My father was as well as usual this day, and eat his dinner as heartily as ever I knew him; after supper he smoked a pipe and went to bed seemingly in perfect health. But while I was by his bed side laying his clothes on him, those words ran through my mind, Amos viii. 2. *The end is come.* I could not think what to make of these words, they seemed so very mysterious to me.

As soon therefore as I quitted the room I went to the throne of grace, where my heart was wonderfully drawn forth, especially that the Lord would shew mercy to my father, and save his soul, for which I was so importunate that I could not tell how to leave pleading; and still that word continued on my mind, *The end is come.* Another thing I entreated of the Lord was that he would stand by me and be with me in whatever trouble I had to meet with, little thinking what was coming upon me that night and the week following.

AFTER this I went to bed, thinking on the freedom which God had given me in prayer, but had not slept long before I heard a mournful noise, which at first I apprehended had been in the yard, but soon perceived it to be my father.

I immediately arose, put on a few clothes, ran and lighted a candle, and coming to him, found him sitting upright in his bed, crying to the Lord for mercy, saying, Lord have mercy on me, for I am a miserable sinner! Lord Jesus wash me in thy precious blood, &c. ! I stood trembling to hear him in such distress, and to see him look so pale, enquired how long he had been ill. He said, I was struck with a pain at my heart in my sleep and shall die presently. I then kneeled down by the bed side, and which I had never done before, prayed with him, in which he seemed to join very earnestly.

THIS done I said, Father I will go and call some body, for I dare not stay with you alone. He replied, You shall not go out at this time of night, don't be afraid, still crying aloud for mercy. Soon after he said he would rise and put on his clothes himself, I ran and made a good fire, and got him something hot, hoping that it might relieve him. O, said he, I want mercy for my soul! Lord shew mercy to me, for I am a great sinner! If thou dost not shew me mercy I am miserable for ever! Father, said I, there is mercy in Jesus Christ for sinners, the Lord help you to lay hold on it. O, replied he, I have been against you for seeking after Jesus

Jesus Christ, the Lord forgive me and lay not this sin to my charge !

I desired him to drink something warm which I had for him, but his trying to drink brought in a violent retching, and he changed black in the face. I stood by holding his head and leaning upon me with all his weight. Dreadful time indeed ! If I left him I was afraid he would fall into the fire ! and if I stand by him he would die in my arms, and no one person near us ! What shall I do ! Lord help me ! Then came that scripture, *Isaiah xli. 10. Fear thou not for I am with thee, be not dismayed I am thy God ; I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee, &c.*

By this time my father revived again out of his fit of fainting, for I think he did swoon away, he repeated his cries as before, Lord have mercy upon me for I am a sinful man ! Lord spare me one week more ! one day more ! Piercing words to me ! After he had sat a while he felt an uneasiness in his bowels, and called for a candle to go into the other room. I saw him stagger as he went over the threshold, soon followed him and found him on the floor, which occasioned me to scream out, Father ! father ! putting my hands under his arms, lifting
with

with all my might, first by one arm than by another, crying and striving till my strength was quite spent *.

I FOUND all my attempts to raise him in vain, and therefore, though not without fears of rogues, who I thought waited at the door, ran like some distracted creature through deep snows to my brothers, where I stood crying in a deplorable manner. The family being alarmed, my brother came immediately with two of his men, and found our father risen from the ground and laid upon the bed. My brother spake to him, but he could not answer, except one word or two. On my return, they desired me not to go into the room, saying he was just departing. O dismal night, had not the Lord wonderfully supported me I must have died too, of the fears and frights which I met with.

My brother's man soon came out, and said he was departed: melancholy tidings! but in midst of my trouble I had a secret hope that he was gone to heaven, nevertheless I sat crying bitterly to think what a sudden and surprizing

* See the remarkable dream of the apple tree, p. 20.

change death had made on my father who went to bed well and was in eternity by midnight ! I said in my heart, Lord give me one seal more that I shall go to heaven when death shall make this change on me. Then that word came directly, Isaiah xxxv. 10. *The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, &c.* O I longed to be gone to heaven ! thought I they are singing whilst I am sorrowing ! O that I had the wings of a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest !

QUICKLY after my brother called in some neighbours, among whom came Mr. F. my bitter enemy, who enquired if my father was dead. Some body replied, Yes, he is. He then said it is no more than what I looked for, though no notice was taken of these words till afterwards. This was Tuesday after the Friday night that I lay in the barn, when that scripture was so frequently in my mind, *Beloved think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you.* I thought now I had met with fiery trials indeed, not knowing that I had as bad of worse to come, which I shall now proceed to relate.

THE day that my father died, the clergyman who met Mr. Bunyan and me at Gam'gay town's end, reported at Baldock fair, that we had been criminally conversant together ; which vile report I heard the next day, but that scripture came with much sweetness and bore me up, Matth. v. 11. *Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.*

ON Thursday we had agreed to bury my father, and accordingly invited our relations and friends to the funeral. But, on the Wednesday night, Mr. F. sends for my brother, and asked him whether he thought my father died a natural death ; a question which amazed my brother, who readily answered in the affirmative, Yes, I know he died a natural death ; Mr. F. replied, but I believe he did not, and I have had my horse out of the stable twice to day to fetch a surgeon, but considered that you are an officer of the parish, therefore leave it to you ; pray see and do your office. Upon my brother's asking him, how he thought my father came to his end if he did not die a natural death, he answered, I believe your sister has poisoned him.

My brother returned with a heavy heart, not knowing but I might lose my life ; on acquainting

quainting my sister she was likewise distressed, when they sent for a godly neighbour to pray with and counsel them, who advised them to keep it from me that night; but early in the morning my brother came and told me, to whom I immediately said, O brother! blessed be God for a clear conscience. We deferred the funeral, and sending for a surgeon, told him the case, who examined me how my father was before he went to bed, and what supper he eat, &c. I told him all the particulars, and, when he had surveyed the corps, he went to Mr. F. and told him that he wondered how he could entertain such thoughts concerning me, assuring him there were no just grounds for his suspicion. Mr. F. replied, he verily believed it was so. The surgeon perceiving that no arguments would convince him, told us we must have a coroner and jury. I readily agreed to this proposal, saying, moreover, sir, as my innocency is known to God I would have it known to men, therefore pray be pleased to open my father. This he declined, saying, there was no need for it, but promised to meet the coroner and jury the next day.

Now I had new work cut out, therefore went to the Lord and prayed that he would appear

pear in this fiery trial. I saw my life lay at stake as well as the name of God struck at, but that word was sent for my support and comfort, and it was a blessed one to my soul, Isaiah liv. 17. *No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn.* Also ch xlv 24. *All that are incensed against thee shall be ashamed.* Encouraged by these precious promises, we sent for the coroner the next morning. Mr. F. hearing it, told my brother he would have him meet the coroner and jury and agree it, for, continued he, it will be found petit treason, and your sister must be burnt. No, sir, replied my brother, we are not ashamed to let them come through. Upon hearing this I said I will have them come through if it costs me all that my father has left me. I did not know how far God might suffer this man and the devil to go. It also troubled me to think that in case I suffered, another as innocent as myself must suffer too, for Mr. F. reported that I poisoned my father, and Mr. Bunyan gave me the stuff to do it with; but the Lord knew our innocency in this affair both in thought, word, and deed.

WHILST thus surrounded with straits and troubles, I must own that at times I had many
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carnal reasonings though I knew myself clear. I thought should God suffer my enemy to prevail to the taking away of my life; how shall I endure burning? O the thoughts of burning were very terrible, and made my very heart to ach within me! But that scripture which I had often thought of before my father's death, came now into my mind, Isaiah xliii. 2. *When thou passest through the fire I will be with thee, &c.* I said in my heart, Lord thou knowest my innocence, therefore if thou art pleased to suffer my enemies to take away my life, yet, surely, thou wilt be with me; thou hast been with me in all my trials hitherto, and I trust wilt not now leave me, in the greatest of all. At last I was made to believe that if I did burn at a stake the Lord would give me his presence, and, in a solemn manner, resigned myself to his disposal, either for life or death.

THAT forenoon in which the coroner was expected some christian friends from Gam'gay, paid me a visit, and spent time in prayer; and pleaded earnestly with the Lord on my behalf, that he would graciously appear for me and glorify his name in my deliverance. This done, I retired, and was much enlarged in begging the divine presence this day, and that I might
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not have so much as a dejected countenance, or be in the least daunted before them. I thought to stand before a company of men for the murder of my own father, though I knew my innocence, would make me sink, unless I had much of the Lord's presence to support me. I thought should I appear dejected or daunted, people will conclude that I am guilty, therefore I begged of God that he would carry me above the fears of men, devils and death, and give me faith and courage to lift up my head before my accusers. Immediately that scripture darted into my mind, Job xvii. 9. *The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.* Then I broke out, Lord thou knowest my heart, and my hands are clear in this matter. This was such a suitable word that I could hardly have had such another, and the Lord made every tittle of it good before the sun went down, so that I was helped to look mine enemies in the face with boldness.

PRESENTLY word was brought that the coroner and jury were come. I sat with some neighbours by the fire as they passed through the house into the room where my father lay, some of the jurymen came, and, taking me by

the hand, with tears running down their cheeks, said, pray God be thy comfort, thou art as innocent as I am I believe; thus one and another spake to me, which I looked upon as a wonderful mercy to find they believed me not guilty.

WHEN the coroner had viewed the corps, he came to warm himself by the fire where I sat, and looking stedfastly at me, he said, are you the daughter of the deceased? I answered yes. He replied, are you the person who was in the house alone with him when he was struck with death? Yes, sir, I am she. He then shook his head, at which I feared his thoughts were evil towards me.

THE jury also having taken their view, they went to dine at my brother's; after which they proceeded to business, and sent for me. As I was going my heart went out much to the Lord, that he would stand by me. Then came those words, *Isaiah liv. 4. Fear not for thou shalt not be ashamed.* And before I came to my brother's house my soul was made like the chariots of Amminadib, being wonderfully supported, even above what I could ask or think.

WHEN

WHEN I got there my brother sent for Mr. F. who not coming soon, he sent again; at last he came. Then the coroner called the witnesses, being my brother's men, who were sworn, he asked them whether they were present when my father died? what words they heard him speak? &c. and when they had answered, he called Mr. F. and gave him his oath, Come, said he, as you are the occasion of our meeting together, we would know about this young woman's murdering her father, and on what grounds you accuse her? Mr. F. but in a confused manner, told the coroner of the late difference between my father and me, how I was shut out of doors, and that my father died but two nights after I was admitted; nobody knew what to make of this strange preamble; but I stood in the parlour amongst them with my heart as full of comfort as it could hold, being got above the fear of men or devils.

THE coroner said, this is nothing to the matter in hand; what have you to accuse this young woman with? To which Mr. F. replied little or nothing to the purpose, and, at the same time, returning cross answers, was bid to stand by. Then I was called. Come sweetheart, said the coroner, tell us where was you
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that night your father shut you out? I answered, sir, I was in the barn all night. And was you there alone? yes sir, I had nobody with me. He shook his head, and proceeded, Where did you go the next morning? sir, I staid in the yard till nine or ten o'clock, entreating my father to let me come in, but he would not.

At this he seemed concerned, and asked, Where I was the remaining part of the day? I said at my brother's, and lay there the following night. When did your father let you come in? On Lord's-day evening. Was he well when you came in? Yes, sir. How long did he live afterwards? Till Tuesday night, sir. Was he well that day? Yes, sir, as well as ever I saw him in my life, and he eat as hearty a dinner. In what manner was he taken, and at what time? Near midnight, complaining of a pain at his heart; I heard him groan and made all haste to light a candle, and when I came, I found him sitting up in his bed and crying out of a pain in his heart, and he said he should presently die, which frightened me much, so that I could scarce get on my clothes, when I made a fire, and my father rose and sat by it. I got him something warm, of which he drank a little, but

but straining to vomit, he swooned away while I held his head, and could not leave him to call in assistance, fearing lest in my absence he should fall into the fire.

THE coroner further proceeded. Was there nobody in the house with you? No, sir, I said, I had none with me but God. At length my father came a little again to himself, and went into the other room, whither I soon followed him and found him lying upon the floor, at which sight I screamed out in a most dismal manner, yet I tried to raise him up, but in vain, till at last, being almost spent, I ran to my brother's in a frightful condition.

HAVING given him this relation, the coroner said, sweet-heart, I have no more to say to you; and then addressed himself to the jury, whose verdict being given, he turned himself to Mr. F. and said, you, sir, who have defamed this young woman in this publick manner, endeavouring to take away her good name, yea, her life also, if you could, ought to make it your business now to establish her reputation. She has met with enough in being alone with her father, when seized with death, you had no need to add to her affliction and sorrow, and if you were to give her five hundred pounds it would not make her amends.

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HE then came to me, and taking me by the hand, said, sweet-heart, do not be daunted, God will take care of thy preferment, and provide thee a husband notwithstanding the malice of this man. I confess these are hard things for one so young as thou art to meet with, but thank God for this deliverance, and never fear but he will take care of thee. Then, addressing myself to the coroner and jury, I said, sirs, if you are not all satisfied I am free my father should be opened, as my innocence is known to God, I would have it known to you also, for I am not afraid of life. No, replied the coroner, we are all satisfied, there is no need of having him opened, but bless God that the malice of this man broke out before thy father was buried.

THE room was full of people, and great observation made of my looks and behaviour. Some gentlemen who were on the jury, as I was afterwards told, said, that they should never forget with what cheerful countenance I stood before them. I know not how I looked, but this I know, my heart was as full of peace and comfort, as it could hold. The jurymen were all much concerned for me, and were observed to weep when the coroner examined me. Indeed I have abundant cause to bless God that they

they were deeply convinced of my innocence, and I have heard that some of them were so affected with my case, that they would long after speak of me with tears.

WHEN the coroner and company were gone, we sent again to our friends to invite them to the funeral, which was on Saturday night. I now thought my trials on this account were over, and that Mr. F. had vented all his malice, but was mistaken, for, seeing he could not take away my life, his next attempt was to deprive me of that substance my father had left me. Accordingly he sends for my brother-in-law from my father's grave, and informed him how things were left in the will, telling him that his wife was cut off with a shilling, but that he could put him in a way to come in for a share*.

THIS was a new trouble. † My brother-in-law threatened if I would not resign part of

* Mr. F. was an attorney, and made the will about three years before her father's death, at which time he put her father forward to give her more than her sister, because of a design he then had of marrying her, but upon her going to the meetings and becoming religious, he turned to be her bitter enemy, was filled with implacable malice and hatred, and did all in his power to prejudice the mind of her father against her.

† The reader is desired to take notice that this was not her own brother, who attended the meeting, and sympathized with her under her sufferings, as before related, but her sister's husband.

what

what my father had left he would begin a suit at law. Mr. F. prompted him on, saying, hang her, do not let her go away with so much more than your wife, &c. And to law we were going, to prevent which and for the sake of peace I satisfied my brother with a handsome present.

ABOUT a month after my father was buried, another report was spread at Biggleswade, that now Agnes Beaumont had confessed she poisoned her father, and was quite distracted. Is it true, said some? Yes, it is true said others. *I have heard the defaming of many report, say they, and we we will report it,* Jer. xx. 10.

BUT I was determined, if it pleased God to spare me till next market day, I would go and let them see I was not distracted, and accordingly went, and when the market was at the height, shewed myself among the people, which put a stop to their business for a time; for their eyes were upon me while I walked through and through with this thought, if there were a thousand more of you I would lift up my head before you all. That day I was well in my soul, and therefore exceeding chearful. Many people came and spake to me, saying, we now see that you are not distracted.

SOME I saw cry, but some others laughed :
O, thought I, mock on, there's a day coming
that will clear up all. That was a wonderful
scripture, Psalm xxxvii. 6. *And he shall bring
forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judg-
ment as the noon-day.*

AFTER this another report was raised in a
different part of the country, that Mr. Bunyan
was a widower and gave me counsel to poison
my father, that he might marry me, which plot
was agreed on they said as we went to Gam'gay.
But this report rather occasioned mirth than
mourning, because Mr. Bunyan, at the same
time, had a good wife living.

Now, thought I, surely Mr. F. has done with
me : but the next summer a fire broke out in
the town ; how it came to pass no one could tell,
but Mr. F. soon found a person on whom to
charge it, for he affirmed that it was I who set
the house on fire ; but, as the Lord knoweth, I
knew nothing of this fire till the doleful cry
reached my ears : this malicious slander was not
much regarded.

THUS have I related both the good and evil
things I have met with, in past dispensations of
providence, and have reason to wish it was well
with my soul now as then. And one mercy the
Lord

Lord added to all the rest, which I cannot but mention, namely, that he kept me from prejudice against Mr. F. for notwithstanding he had so greatly injured me, I was helped to cry to the Lord, and that with many tears, for mercy on his soul. I can truly say that I earnestly longed after his salvation, and begged of God to forgive him whatever he had said or done to my hurt*.

AGNES BEAUMONT.

N. B. Mrs. Beaumont survived these trials many years, and was twice married; her last husband's name was Story, a person of considerable substance and great seriousness. She died at Highgate, November 28, 1720, aged 68 years. Her remains, by her order, were brought to Hitchin, where they lie interred in the Baptist burying-ground, and her funeral discourse was preached by my worthy predecessor for the late Rev. Mr. Needham, from 2 Corinth. iv. 17. *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*

* A most excellent spirit, which every Christian should aim at, being perfectly agreeable both to the precept and pattern of our great Lord and Master. See Matth. v. 44. and Luke xxiii. 34.

F I N I S.

